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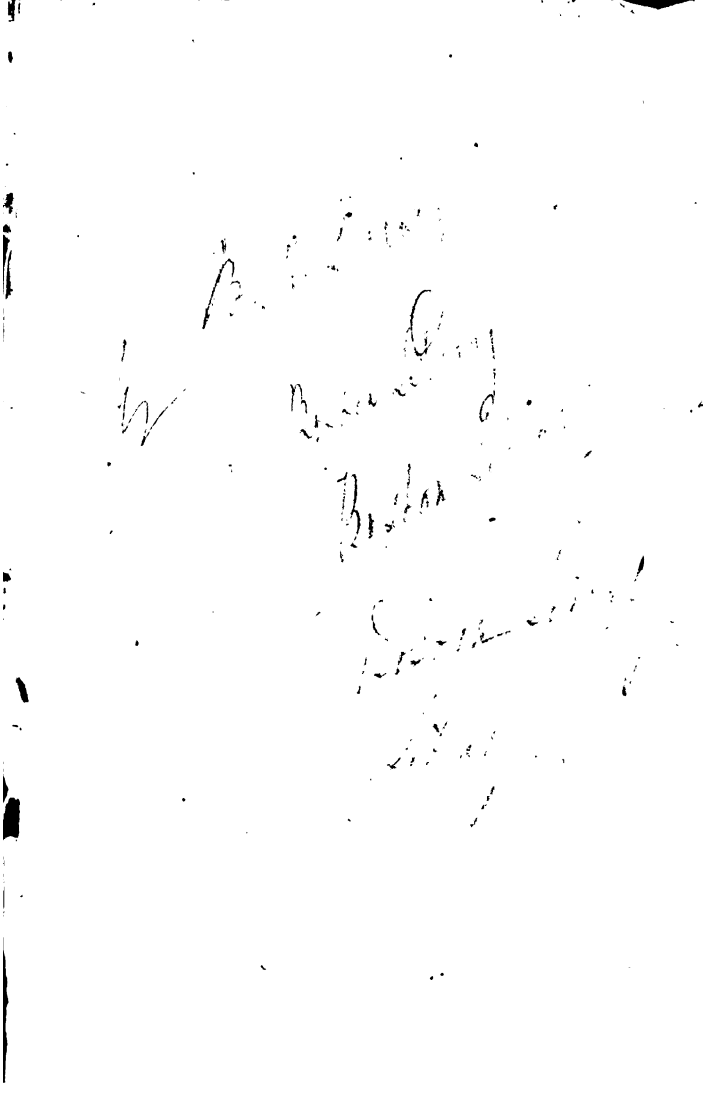

THE HAMLETS.

A TALE.

BY

HARRIET MARTINEAU.

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THE HAMLETS.

CHAPTER I.

THE ORPHANS' WELCOME.

It was a very warm May afternoon, when Mrs. Monk, the wife of Monk the fisherman, pursued her way homewards through the weary deep sand which extended between the hamlet of Hurst and her cottage on the beach. Slowly as she walked, the children who were her companions could scarcely keep up with her. She had carried her own little boy, of three years old, through the roughly-paved street of Hurst, and had set him down on coming to the sand, where, if he fell, he could not easily hurt himself, and in crossing which he might take his own time. The two other children were not her own. They were the orphan children of a fisherman, who had been drowned in a late storm at sea; and Mrs. Monk's errand this afternoon had been to take charge of them from the parish; the overseer having offered to board them with her for

eighteen-pence a week. Harriet was a stout girl of ten, and her pale-faced brother, Ben, just turned nine. They now followed in the train of Mrs. Monk, and kept no more than a respectful distance as long as the child was willing to be half led, half carried by the two elder ones; but when he wrenched his hand from Ben, to pick up a bit of red lobster-shell, Ben walked off by himself, as if offended, and Harriet found it a hard and warm task to get her charge along, crying, as he did, if she ran on a few steps to lure him forwards, and persisting in stopping every moment while she had hold of his hand. Mrs. Monk had disappeared among the boats, and Ben seemed to have found something curious on the margin of the tide, while Harriet and Fred were but midway over the sand.

Monk seemed to relish the warmth of the weather more than his wife had done. When she arrived, she found him basking on the ground, on the sunny side of his boat, asleep, as a passenger would have declared, but awake enough to half open his eyes when his wife's step approached, and ask her for the tobacco she was to bring him. He thought she never would have come back, and he wanted his tobacco.

Mrs. Monk was frightened to think that she had forgotten the tobacco; but if her husband knew what a bustle there had been—

What cared he for the bustle? She must just step back for the tobacco as quick as she could. It was plague enough that she had kept him waiting all this time.

Could not he just step himself? She had to give these children their suppers, and to manage about a bed for them; and she had been in the midst of so much disturbance all the afternoon, she was not fit to be kept standing any longer.

"So you have brought the children back!—one of them will run to the shop; do make haste and send one of them."

Ben looked shy and alarmed, and Harriet offered to go.

"I suppose," said Mrs. Monk to her husband, "you are thinking of putting out to sea, as you can't get your own tobacco. I don't like sending the girl back to the shop, such a bustle as there is there; but, indeed, it is like to be a fine night for the fishing."

"No such thing; it is like to be a rough night, and I am not going to put out with the risk of bad weather."

"If it is not too rough, such is just the weather for the mackerel. Dyer is gone out, I see, and Hart is making ready; and they have both brought in a fine draught since you took your last trip."

"And they may bring in another, for any thing that I care; I sha'n't stir to-day. What

sort of a bargain did you make about the children ?"

"We are to have eighteen-pence a week for each of them; the overseer left word with his wife that it is enough, and I could not say but it was."

"'T is little enough; but you must get work out of them to make it answer. They ought to be able to do a deal at their age."

"I expect to find them willing; and it is good for young things to work. Indeed, I told Ben that you would take him out fishing to-night."

"Then you told him wrong, and you may find him something else to do; I sha' n't stir to-day."

Not even to purchase his own luxuries, his wife perceived; and, as it was so, she only hoped he would doze till Harriet could be back with her purchase. It was very provoking that the tobacco should have been forgotten: but a scene had been going forward in the shop which might well serve to excuse the neglect. Reece, the shopkeeper, was the overseer; and, in consequence of this office, was more unpopular than it suits the interest of a shopkeeper to be. In striving to offend nobody, he had placed himself at the mercy of the people about him; and the consequences fell occasionally upon his wife; a timid woman, who was even less able than himself to

bear them. Reece was known to be away this day, at Weston, on parish business; and the wives of certain bold paupers had taken the opportunity of frightening Mrs. Reece into giving them money in her husband's absence. Mrs. Monk had seen her, after faint attempts to return argument for bullying, resort to a boot, one of a pair which stood on a high shelf, and pay therefrom a shilling to one applicant, and eighteen-pence to another, and even so much as half-a-crown to a shrill-voiced, red-faced dame, who held up her fist in corroboration of her tongue.

Harriet came back in terror, lest she should be also chidden for delay. Mrs. Reece had not been able to attend to her till she had waited a long while; and no wonder, considering the confusion about the door. The constable had been called, and had carried away a woman who had seized the boot in which the money was contained; declaring that she would pay herself what she had a right to. This was going rather too far, even for the gentle Mrs. Reece, and she had ventured to call in the constable. A crowd gathered, of course, about the door; and when Harriet was there they had not dispersed. Mrs. Reece was crying; and it was reported that she repented what she had done, and was going to the magistrate to beg the woman off.

"Well, my dear," observed Mrs. Monk to

Harriet, "depend upon it, it is a better thing for you to be here than to have gone with Bessy. There, now don't begin to cry, as soon as one mentions Bessy; you will see her very often, you know; quite often enough, in my opinion, if these bullying sort of people are the people she is to live amongst. It will be a wonder if she does not catch up their manners; and as for you and Ben, however little I may be able to do for you, depend upon it you will stand a better chance here than in Hurst workhouse."

Harriet knew little about the workhouse, but that her friend Bessy was going to live in it; and she would have liked to be with Bessy. Bessy was five years older than Harriet; but they had been accustomed to play together, and to go backwards and forwards to school in company, till the farmer had been obliged to drop the school, and nobody had taken it up. Bessy had promised to see Harriet on the beach and on the down as often as she could; and the workhouse people had so much liberty, that this would probably be almost daily; but it was not the same thing to Harriet as if she could have Bessy always at hand, to say any thing to, and to take the lead in all they might have to do. She was very fond of Ben; but Ben might have been in the workhouse too. To make the matter worse this evening, Ben was very cross; whether from shyness, (which

always made him cross,) or from being disappointed of going out to sea, his sister could not tell; but he did not seem to have a word to say to her when Mrs. Monk turned her back for a minute. He dared not yet show any ill-humor to Mrs. Monk or to her husband; Harriet had the benefit of it all.

Her uncomfortable thoughts were not soothed by what she overheard Mrs. Monk muttering to herself about her hopes that this was not the way they were to go on; her husband taking no care about the children, and they seeming so unhappy and so helpless. Harriet was longing for something to do; but she did not know her way about the holes and corners of the cottage, and could not ask to go to bed till she had found out where she was to sleep. She now thought she could make an effort for Ben's sake; and she asked whether Ben might not go to bed.

"When he has had his supper; but I have had no time to get it for him yet. Shall you get it? Yes, to be sure you may: there is the bread on yonder shelf; and you may have the milk now, instead of waiting for it, if—O, here comes the milk! carry out that jug for it. What 's the matter? What is at the bottom of the jug? O, my husband's beer has been in it. Well, wash it, quick!—at that tub of water. Here, let me wipe it with my apron. Now take in the milk. What! can't you cut

the bread? Bless me! you must learn. Now, while Ben is getting his supper, come and see what sort of a place we can make for you to sleep in. Ben must sleep with Fred: they will make room to sleep, I warrant, though the place is small; and you can bundle up these things for a bed for yourself in yon corner, I dare say. Very well! you have made a bed before, I see, though you can't cut a crusty loaf. Now, how soon can you be up in the morning, do you think?"

Harriet, who had recovered her spirits by dint of bustling, had little doubt she could be up when Mrs. Monk pleased.

"Very well; then eat your supper, and I will tell you. You know you must set your mind to earning something; both of you, mind, Ben. I can't afford to have you lying about asleep on the down, or doing mischief on the beach, like many older than you that I am ashamed to see, every time I go out. I must look about for employment for you; and, meantime, you might as well bring me what wool you can get from the down: between this and shearing-time there will be a good deal on the bushes."

Harriet thought she should like this; but where was she to put the wool as she got it? Why, where did she suppose but into an apron that she might take for the purpose? Harriet happened to have a bag; and it was agreed

that the bag, being the smallest, might do for Ben, and the apron for her. Two wedges of brown bread were put into the bag for their breakfast, and they might come home when they had gathered wool till they were very hungry. This settled, Ben was sent to wash his face at the tub, and go to bed. Harriet was wanted yet a little longer, to put away two plates and a basin; to throw out some potato-peelings into the ash-hole, and blow the fire to boil the kettle for Monk's cup of tea. When all this was nearly finished, a low wail was heard from the next room. On inquiry, it was found to proceed from Ben; not yet in bed, but standing in his shirt, wiping away his tears with its ragged sleeve. His grief was that he could not get into bed, as the baby was lying directly across; his little feet appearing where Ben wanted to rest his weary shoulders, and the same little feet being old enough to kick rather vigorously on receiving a hint to get back into their proper places. This matter being arranged by Mrs. Monk in a moment, and Ben helped by the same hand to lie down without pushing Fred out upon the floor, the boy was permitted to go to sleep, as soon as he could, under the conviction that he must not move half an inch to the right or to the left.

The children, dreaming anxiously in their unaccustomed beds of the next morning's ris-

ing, were happier than Monk and his wife over their tea. The fisherman had not energy to make his circumstances as good as they might be; but he could complain as bitterly as any man of the declining state of the place, and the wrongs which he supposed himself subject to from certain dwellers in Hurst. He was this evening in high dudgeon, on account of the reported approaching departure of certain housekeepers, who had long been his customers for fish. He understood that Groves was about to remove to the next parish; and he had himself seen bills in the windows of Moss' house, which was to be vacant at Michaelmas. He wondered what these people came for, if they must go away when they had taught their neighbors to depend upon them for custom, and—

"And for the rates," observed his wife. "That is the root of the matter, they tell me. The rates are too high for any middling shopkeeper to bear; so no wonder they talk of going somewhere where they will be taxed less for the parish."

"As for that matter, they may as well go as stay; for there is no getting them to pay. You had better look sharp after your three shillings a week for these children; for I hear that, take together all that are rated, not above one in five pays."

"Because they can't pay, I suppose."

"Well, but it is such a shame! What is to become of us poor, I wonder, if the better sort grudge us our right in such a way?"

"We must go out fishing in foul weather as well as fair, I suppose," replied the wife, glancing timidly, first out of the window, and then at her husband. "Not that I think it will be foul weather to-night," she continued.

"I am doubtful about it," said her spouse, shutting one eye, and looking up with the other through his own clouds of tobacco smoke into the sky, "I am doubtful still; but, at any rate, it is too late now."

"There is Wilkins' boat but a quarter of a mile beyond the reef," answered Mrs. Monk; "he is not in doubt, it seems."

"His head has not been on his shoulders so many years as mine, love. When it has, he will know better than to go, and get tossed, and drenched, and wearied, when the parish is bound to give him the worth of whatever fish he might find."

"But our rent-day comes round in a fortnight, and we have got nothing ready for it, but what I ought to have by me against my confinement."

"Keep it by you; the parish must pay the rent.

"What reason have we—"

"Have done with your reasons, will you? I can't pay the rent, and I shall say so; and

let us see whether Reece dares make any objection to the parish doing so; so much as I buy at his shop. Hold your tongue about my going out, I tell you: it is a pretty thing for you, who stay at home in peace and under shelter, to give me broad hints about putting out, to be tossed and blown about, while every body belonging to me is sound asleep. You may mind your own business, and hold your tongue."

The dame did both to such good purpose that scarcely another word could be extracted from her this night. She minded her own business—the business of the wives of such men as Monk; she refreshed herself from her hard day's work with a scanty crust, because her husband, who had been doing nothing, ate up the rest of the loaf; she lighted a fresh candle, to sit down and darn his stockings, when he threw himself, already half asleep, into bed; she cautiously opened the lattice, because she was sickened with the smoke which still hovered in the apartment, and hastily shut the window again, when her husband gave fearful token that the winds of heaven were visiting his face too roughly. There was little room to wonder that she obeyed the other injunction—to hold her tongue. It was long since she was known to enliven her solitary work by a song, as in the days of her girlhood; and her little boy was

never overheard talking to himself, as children do whose young powers of speech are properly exercised by a cheerful mother.

The children's breakfast was secure, Mrs. Monk remembered, whatever her own might be. She heard them trudge off with it early in the morning, after having turned and turned again in their beds, and called in a whisper to each other to know whether it was time to get up. The matter was decided by guesswork at last; for the sun was only just peeping up above the eastern waves when they went out, running over the shingle for the first fifty yards, as if escaping from a prison.

It was high noon when they returned, and Monk had been gone to sea some hours.

"Well, my dears," said Mrs. Monk, "did you find any wool?"

The question was answered by the children throwing down the apron which they carried between them, and untying it, to show a very respectable bundle of flocks. Mrs. Monk pronounced this a good morning's work, and asked them if they were quite sure that none of their wealth came direct from any sheep's back. They declared that wherever there were sheep on the downs, there had been a shepherd, who would not have let them pluck wool from any but lawful places; and they also exhibited more pricks and scratches than could have come from any but a most intrepid

search among the furze-bushes. Mrs. Monk would now have been satisfied, if the children would have let her; but they had more wonders to display.

"You forgot the bag," said Harriet, with a broad smile, while Ben gave a caper before he stood stock still to watch the effect of the disclosure.

"What; more wool still in the bag? Dear me!"

"Yes, more wool; a little more wool."

"And something besides wool."

"Now, do n't tell," said the children, interrupting one another.

The sight was worth seeing, when, at last, it did appear: four smooth, pure white eggs—the delicate eggs of the guillemot—came forth from the wool with which the bag was lined.

"Mercy! children, you have not been over the cliff, to be sure!"

"No, the cliff-ravens got these for us," said Harriet. "We saw a big raven light, and we guessed what he had got; and we went when he flew away, and under some bits of chalk we found this egg."

"No, no," said Ben; "this one was the first we got: that other came from under the furze-bush. This was the one that lay in the hag-track."

"Ah, so it is. Well, these other two are

what we watched for, when once we had begun to find. There was somebody shooting below; and when the wills flew off the benches, the ravens popped down, and we followed them—O such a way—when they came up again. Are they not pretty eggs?"

"Very fine eggs, and quite fresh, no doubt: we may trust the ravens for getting fresh eggs. Now my advice is, that you take them to the Cottage to sell. The young ladies may not know yet, being strangers, how much is thought of these eggs; but you may as well try. I shall be glad if you make something of your first fetch of eggs. But, stop: don't be in such a hurry to tie your bonnet, Harriet. The potatoes are just ready, and you must have your dinners first. Now can you creep up into the loft, and find a corner to stow the wool in till shearing-time? Then we will have a cleaning of all you have got. Hand the apron up to pour sister, Ben, while I take off the potatoes, and then make yourself tidy to go to the Cottage."

CHAPTER II.

AGE WITHOUT HONOR.

Mr. Barry, the owner and inhabitant of the Cottage, was a gentleman of small fortune,

who had only lately become a resident at Hurst. He had two daughters, the eldest of whom was now out of health, and it was on her account that the family had left London, and come to live on their sea-side property. They had now been at Hurst long enough to become aware that if its state had been understood by them some months before, they should have chosen some other part of the coast, notwithstanding the advantage of having here a house of their own to live in. The curse of pauperism appeared to spread itself over the whole place, and, like one of the Egyptian abominations, penetrated into the recesses of every house. Mr. Barry found not only drunkenness in the streets, idleness on the downs, discontent in the farm-house, and pining misery in the hovel, but fraud, spreading from the transactions of the overseer's office till it tainted all the dealings of the place. The servants he had brought with him were no longer what they had been; and it became nearly as difficult to his daughters to deal with tradesmen as to escape from beggars. For his part, his income was not so large but that he felt the pressure of the heavy poor-rate to be a great grievance; and it was a melancholy thing to look forward to the annual increase which must be expected under the continuance of the present system. He was very explicit on the subject of his con-

cern and apprehensions with the neighboring gentlemen at whose houses he dined, and whom he met at church, or in his rides and walks: but though they agreed as to the evils of the general state of things, (which nobody could pretend to think a good state,) there was great difficulty in bringing any two to assent to any one remedial method. Mr. Rickman, the farmer, would hear no more against paying wages out of the rate, than Copland, the builder, against discharging the rents from the same source. Colonel Lee did not see how the allowance system was to be dispensed with; and the curate, Mr. Shaw, thought it the plain duty of Christians to give more and more willingly to the indigent, the more indigent there were. When it was hinted that Christian charity might do more honor to its name if it could supersede misery instead of palliating it, if it could lessen the number of indigent, instead of reconciling the poor to indigence, he smiled, and promised a sermon on this new aspect of an old virtue, as soon as a tangible exemplification of it should be presented to him. On one point all these gentlemen were now, however, likely to arrive at the same conviction. The scenes of riot which had this day taken place in Reece's shop exhibited clearly the principle, that a shopkeeper is not the proper dispenser of optional relief among his customers. It was

pretty evident that Reece must cease to be overseer, though it was not so certain that a successor could be found, who would not be more or less shackled by the same incumbrances of private interest. All the tradesmen of the place were circumstanced like Reece; and the farmers had ricks that might be burned by angry paupers, and must pay wages which might be conveniently eked out by parish-pay. If there had been a certain fixed mode of relief appointed, which neither farmer nor tradesman could think of altering, there would have been an end at once of temptation and suspicion; of apprehension on the part of the distributor of parish bounties, and of extravagant expectation on the part of the receivers. Such a fixed mode did not yet exist, however; and, in its absence, the best measure seemed to be to appoint an overseer who bore the least possible relation of pecuniary interest to the people of Hurst. Mr. Barry was such an one; and as he was willing to take the office upon himself at a particularly troublesome time, nothing was said against his appointment, though the farmer, the magistrate, the tradesman, and the clergyman, had each his secret belief that the new overseer would fail in some wild scheme or another for the improvement of parish affairs.

Not that Mr. Barry was usually considered any thing of an enthusiast. No one could

harbor such an idea who saw him jogging along on his tame pony, observing every thing he passed, and nodding at most things that he observed, as if they corroborated something in his own mind. His whole demeanor showed, as plainly as demeanor can show any thing, that though his good-humor would allow of other people being in the clouds as much as they would, he must beg to be excused from mounting there himself. He had always enough before his eyes, he believed, to occupy him fully; and though others might soar for a wider lookout, it suited him better to take what was put in his way as subject matter for the moderate degree of thought and action which was necessary to his happiness. He was no more of a bustler than he was of a schemer; no more of a meddler than of a visionary; and no one would have thought of ascribing impracticable plans to him, if some of his declared notions had not been at variance with the state of things, which seemed, by some natural necessity, to be sinking from bad to worse, and from worse to desperate.

It was settled, no one objecting, that Mr. Barry was to be overseer; and Reece took down, for the last time, his parish pair of boots, in order to render up his account of the expenditure of the year. When he had produced a few shillings and sixpences from the

right boot, and receipts for many hundreds of pounds from the left, his business was done, as far as he could pretend to discharge it. He could give no account of the money raised, except in as far as it might be deduced from a comparison of the list of rate-payers as it stood on Joy the tailor's measure (Joy having been overseer three years before) with the list of arrears now presented on a slate. As for parish-books, if there were any, Reece was guiltless of all knowledge of them. The gentlemen might depend upon it all must be right enough if he kept money in one place, and carefully put away the receipts in another: but if it would satisfy them better to cast up the sums, they were welcome to do so, for any offence it would occasion to him. The gentlemen made use of the permission thus kindly offered, and found that the receipts exhibited an expenditure of twelve hundred and forty-five pounds, and that the list of arrears required as close an examination as Reece's claim for the repayment of advances made in consequence of these arrears.

Mr. Barry entered on his office as quietly as if all was going right in it. He did not fret and fume among the delinquent rate-payers, nor boast to the paupers that they had a new hand to deal with, and would find that that hand was about to turn over a new leaf. He was known to have visited the workhouse,

and to have had it measured and examined by a builder. The railing which filled up the fourth side of the square in which the workhouse stood was removed, and the space built up of solid brick, like the three other sides; and even the door in this wall had no peep-hole left, except a very small wicket; so that the gayeties of the road could no longer be seen. Mr. Barry had also been observed walking to Weston, and trotting to the other neighboring hamlet of Barham; and reports were abroad of the new overseer having insisted on there being a new governor of the workhouse, and of his having been permitted to make his own choice of this officer. Beyond these small movements, there was no bustle caused by the change of administration.

Mrs. Monk was one day dropping a few tears over a folly of her own, when Goody Gidney, an aged pauper, came over the sands, as was her frequent practice in summer, to chat with her, and spend a few sighs over the fancies of people who would not be satisfied with good old ways. Mrs. Monk's folly was the having told her husband that she had a little money laid by against her confinement; a communicativeness proved to be folly by his having given notice that he wanted the money particularly; not to pay his rent—the parish must do that—but for some secret purpose: she suspected to risk in a smuggling adven-

ture. This was an occasion which might excuse a few tears. The fancies over which Goody Gidney came to sigh were some of those which had been anticipated from the new overseer.

"Now, sit'ye down," said Mrs. Monk; "it is some time since I 've seen you abroad, Goody."

"And that 's the more wonder, as they have left us so little to look at at home. It is seventy years this midsummer that I have had my seat inside the workhouse paling, to look out upon the road, morning and evening, summer and winter; and now they have filled up all with brick-work, so that there is nothing to be seen but a carrot-bed just under the wall. The place is so dull now, that the wonder is, as you say, that I have not been more abroad."

"Seventy years, did you say, Goody? I knew you were well acquainted with the inside of the workhouse, but I had no notion you could have been there so long. Seventy years have you sat within those pales?"

"Not till next month; seventy years come midsummer, was what I said. I was just past five years old when my mother brought me in with her; and I remember her setting me up on those very pales—only they have been painted often since—to see the geese on the down; for there was no row of cottages there

then. After the geese, there was a potato-field there; and when the potato-field was let down, it was made the pound; and many a laugh we had at the cattle that were put in. Then, when there was no cattle in the hamlet but the farmers', that were not likely to get into the pound, it was taken down, and the new row of cottages built."

"The new row!" exclaimed Mrs. Monk; "why, Goody, I was born in one of those cottages."

"May be so; for you are but a youngster, though your husband was just going out of his frocks, I remember, when I was thinking of marrying Tom Cocks, the villain that ran away and left me. There must be thirty years, I fancy, between you and your husband. Well, but as I was going to say, whatever might be opposite the workhouse, there was generally something passing to amuse us; especially in the season when so much company comes to the sea; and now it is all shut out with this ugly brick wall. However, it does not signify to me so much as to some others—to those who are to stay behind."

"Why, indeed, as the parson says, Goody, the passing shows of this world signify little, to—"

"Oh, I do n't mean that," replied the old dame; "I am not so old as you think for.

What I am thinking of is our moving to Weston. They are going to remove us old folks and the children to Weston."

"After you have been steady to the same place for a long life! Well, that does seem hard; and what will you do at Weston?"

"They say we are to be more comfortable and quiet at Weston than we can be here; and I do n't mean to deny that there may be more noise than suits old heads in our place; at least, I see some of the poor old creatures, that have not been long used to it, like me, grow very cross about the clatter of the men over their beer. But I would put up with that rather than quit; that is, if they left the paling as it was."

"But I do n't understand about Weston; nobody lives there but the market-gardener: the only other house that I know of is the squire's, and that has been shut up these six years."

"That is all true: but the parish has a great concern in that small hamlet, though nobody lives there but the market-gardener. There was such a number of settlements got there by service in the squire's family, that it is a great expense, they say, to the parish. Now, if the different hamlets help one another, they think they can lessen the expense: so all the old and weakly folks and children are to go from this workhouse to live in the

empty place they are making ready at Weston; and any middle-aged, working people that claim relief at Weston are to be received here; and some say that Barham is to be taken into the bargain too."

"Well, it seems to me an odd way of saving, to make two workhouses, when there was only one before; but you will have a fine air, Goody, on that hill, and a sweet view as one need look upon, and quite within a walk of your old friends too. 'T is an easy walk for you still, I should think."

"Still! what should hinder my walking as well as ever I did, I wonder?" said the offended dame; "I fancy we shall be better off as to seeing our friends than those that stay behind; for 't is said there is to be great strictness about going in and coming out of the workhouse."

"Ay, there is always talk of that when a new overseer comes in. I remember it when Rickman took it; and in Reece's early time; and, to be sure, they both look as if they could be cross; but to look at Mr. Barry—Dear me! how it made me start! seeing the young ladies outside, just when I was speaking of their father.—Walk in, young ladies. Please to walk in, Miss Barry, and Miss Emily. It was the children you wanted, I dare say. We were glad you liked the eggs; they are considered a great dainty hereabouts.

I am sorry to see Miss Barry look as if she wanted more such good nourishment."

It was on business about the children that the ladies came; not only to praise the eggs, and promise to take more whenever brought quite fresh, but to give notice of a certain arrangement about their schooling. The ladies repeated what Goody Gidney had told of the intended removal of part of the workhouse establishment to Weston: eleven old and sick people, and twenty-five children, were to be there placed; leaving forty-four able-bodied paupers behind. The easy, good-tempered governor was to look after the old and young, who were attached to him, and his wife was to be schoolmistress to the five-and-twenty children. Any children who had been placed out by the parish, as Harriet and Ben were, were to be permitted to attend the school, on the condition of bringing to the workhouse, by a certain hour, a daily portion of grass for platting, from the marsh, where it grew in abundance: which marsh they must pass on their way home. The Miss Barrys were anxious that Harriet and Ben should have the advantage of attending this school, and came to urge Mrs. Monk to let them go.

Mrs. Monk had not the least objection to the children learning whatever the ladies thought they should know; but she hoped they would consider the difference the school-

ing would make to her in respect of their work. It was hard enough to make it answer to keep them now, as it was. She conceived she had a title to all their labor, such as it was, and to all that it might be when they grew up to labor to better purpose. If they were out for five or six hours a day, wearing shoe-leather all the time, and came home tired, as she supposed they would, she could not undertake to keep them both for three shillings a week.

"You must speak to my father about that part of the business," said Miss Barry; "for it is a matter that Emily and I have nothing to do with. The interests of the children are what we are thinking of; and it seems to me that we can hardly consider them too carefully."

"Very true, Miss Barry. When one thinks of their poor mother, laid in the churchyard, and their father, down under the sea, and remembers that the same may happen to one's own any day, one would not look too close to one's own interest, except that they are the charge of the parish, and the parish should take care of its own."

"To be sure," interrupted Goody Gidney, "that is what I have always said, when they have wanted to drive me out here and there, and nobody knows where, for a livelihood. 'I belong to the parish,' says I always, 'and the parish is bound to take care of its own.'"

"So to take care of its own," observed Miss Barry, "as that they shall least suffer for being under its charge. We are too apt to forget what we really mean when we talk of the parish, and to think of it merely as some place from which shillings and sixpences are to come when they are called for."

"Yes," said Emily, "we talk of the parish as if it were something separate from all of us; as we might speak of the parliament up in London, or the Indies, or the other side the world. But the parish is made up of you and me, and papa and Mr. Copland, and every body; and we have all agreed together to take charge of these poor orphans, and be what their parents might have been to them. Then comes the question how we shall bring them up; whether they shall remain ignorant, and turn out idle, as most parish children have done here, or whether we shall have them taught as if we really cared for what we have undertaken to do for them."

"I am sure I have done what is in my power, ladies. I have fed them better than I have fed myself, and sent them to their sleep many a time when I should have been glad enough of Harriet's help; and I will say that they have learned no wickedness here, and that I have taught them much that they did not know before, in the way of handiness about what they undertake."

"Very true, indeed, Mrs. Monk; we have observed all this, and we are anxious that they should stay with you rather than be taken into the school; which they must be, unless you can spare them daily. My father hopes that from this school the children will turn out quite different from what they were in the old workhouse, and he makes it a rule that all the parish children attend it. You must remember how much more likely they will be to repay you for your care of them, after being properly taught, than if they spent their whole time on the down, and in nursing your baby, and helping you in house matters. It is very right that they should do all these things, but we should take care that they know how to do more; that they should be qualified to get free of the parish as soon as possible."

"Recollect what an advantage it will be to you," added Emily, "when Harriet can do your sewing for you, and Ben be trusted to sell your husband's fish, and reckon the money right. Those will be the times when they will repay you for sparing them now for four or five hours in the day."

Goody Gidney observed that parish children were left to shift for themselves in the workhouse in her day, without being made of so much consequence as boys and girls were considered now-a-days.

Emily rather thought these same neglected parish children had managed to make themselves of more consequence to the parish in the end than the parish quite liked. One such, she knew, had left two children, and fourteen grandchildren, a burden upon the rates. Another had never been able to settle, and had cost the parish more in removals than an abode of seventy years in the workhouse, like Goody's own, would have done. The bones of a third were swinging on a gibbet in some distant place, where he had carried the name of his parish to disgrace it; and several more had involved their native place in heavy fines to repair the mischief they had done in rick-burning and other violences. It was better, it appeared to Emily, to make children of consequence enough to keep them out of harm's way, and cure their ignorance, when they were young, than to drive them to distinguish themselves miserably when they grew up. How was the parish to answer to the parents of the orphans who grew up profligates and murderers, much more to the great Parent who expressly deposited this charge, for having acquitted itself no better of its responsibility?

Mrs. Monk acknowledged that she should never forgive herself if Ben should become a rick-burner, from her having done any thing to prevent his knowing better. She should

think his mother was looking down from the sky, and his father up from the sea, to reproach her: but it seemed to her rather a new thing to take the case of parish children so much to heart.

"If we consider," said Miss Barry, "how many are made parish children by ourselves, the wonder is that we can be so careless as we have been about what becomes of them. Now and then it pleases God to throw little children on our mercy by taking away their parents, and leaving them without natural guardians; but it much oftener pleases man to bring families under the cruel mercy of the parish by mismanaging the labor on which we all live, and by interfering with the course of industry. It pleases man to separate children from their natural guardians, by either tyranny or temptation, too strong for the poor and the ignorant to resist. The least that man can do in reparation is to place the children in no worse a condition than they would have been in the home provided by independent industry. If the parents are driven upon the parish, or tempted into the workhouse, nothing can repair the injury to them; but to bring up their little ones to such a destiny as that of parish children usually is, is an iniquity which God will no more pardon than man ought to endure."

Goody Gidney took snuff in sign of offence

at hearing paupers thus spoken of. She thought she had gone through life very decently, and challenged any body to say any harm of her, brought up, as she had been, by the parish. The ladies thought that if she was unconscious of any impropriety in having lived seventy years at other people's expense, and in leaving the world without having done any thing for society, except trying its patience, there was little use in argument. A glance from Mrs. Monk also showed them that Goody's destiny was not exactly that which she should covet for Harriet. It was thought that the old pauper had never earned so many pence as Harriet had received already for eggs, wool, and running of errands,—in which last occupation she was employed in the place of many an abler-bodied person who disliked the trouble of walking in hot weather, and preferred sleeping away the intervals of parish pay.

As Harriet ran in at the moment to give notice that Monk's boat was in sight, and coming in quick with a fair wind, the ladies inquired of her what she and Ben meant to do with their pence as they got them. Mrs. Monk sighed, and said there was a sad want of some safe and profitable place in which to store up small sums. The ladies were surprised to hear this complaint when they knew there was a savings bank at Barham: but

they had to learn that the men of Hurst would not let any one belonging to them deposit money openly, lest the parish should know of it, and make a difficulty about paying their rents, and the allowance for their children. When it had come out that Monk had prohibited his family from having any thing to do with the savings bank, the young ladies asked whether they could be of use in taking care of any small sums the children might have from time to time. Mrs. Monk eagerly called Miss Emily out of Goody's hearing, and begged to be included in the offer, producing a bit of blue rag tied up, which yielded the eleven shillings she had long been saving to help to answer the expenses of her confinement.

While Mrs. Monk was hunting high and low for a pen to dip into the dusty ink, with which her husband had now and then to scrawl a bill for fish, and with which Emily was now wishing to write an acknowledgment of the eleven shillings, Harriet disappeared to watch again for the boat which was bringing Ben from his first trip. In a few minutes, both girl and boy reappeared, hauling along a pannier of fish, too heavy to be carried more than three steps without resting. They brought a message that Mrs. Monk was to go down and bring up the nets, and then be sorting the fish till Monk should come home

from the public-house, where he was gone to refresh himself.

Ben had been very sick before he landed; and he looked rather crossly at Harriet as she stood clapping her hands to see how high the last wave carried the boat upon the beach; but when he bethought himself of showing how his hands were chafed with the line, and saw how proud Harriet was of his having caught an oar which was near falling overboard, and how miserable at his having nearly fallen overboard himself, he grew grand and good-humored, and thought Mrs. Monk might perhaps not trouble herself about the nets, but leave the contents of the boat in his charge. He insisted upon it that he knew perfectly well what was in the boat, and what was to be done, but was desired, with a wink, to go down and touch nothing, but wait till she should come. Perceiving that the wink related to themselves, (Goody having slipped away on finding that she had had her share of notice for this day,) the ladies took leave, hoping that the children's attendance at the school would be secured without their being removed from under Mrs. Monk's care.

The mood of complacency in which they left Mrs. Monk, from her having disposed safely of her money, and been honored by a visit of consultation from the ladies, was soon disturbed by the fisherman, who returned

wrathful at what he had heard at the public-house, and perhaps a little the worse for what he had taken in his heated and hungry state. He stalked in between his wife and the children, who were seated on the shingle, busy about the fish, blamed them for his stumble over a line which he had not perceived, and desired Mrs. Monk to make haste and fetch him what money she had. She tremblingly produced two sixpences and three half-pence, which were jerked angrily out of her hand upon the shingle, where it would be well if the sixpences should prove recoverable among the large stones.

"What makes you so lazy?" he cried. "'T is not what is in your pocket that I want, but what you have laid by. Up and fetch it, I say."

"I have no more money than this," she replied. "There is not a farthing in the house. You may go and see."

"Then you lied when you said there was. You said you had got some against the autumn."

"So I did, and so I have; and I am not going to spend it, or let any body spend it, before the autumn. I am not going to let the child that is coming wait on charity, any more than the child that is playing yonder, while I can work and save for them both. The money—and little enough it is—is safe,

where you will not get it; which you would do if it was in the house."

"If you have dared to go to the savings bank—"

"I have neither been nor sent, nor had any dealings with the bank, because you forbade me; but you will not forbid me making ready for my time, I am sure, husband, nor be angry at my doing what every decent wife should. Think how many husbands there are that make the contrary complaint!"

Monk did not deny this; but his wife did not know all. It was his belief that Barry must be mad as to parish matters. He had actually given notice that no more rents would be paid from parish-funds; and, what was yet more absurd, that every dwelling in the hamlet was to be rated.

"Rated! why, he is not going to rate us?"

"Yes, but he is; and even poorer cottages than ours. So now you may see whether I am not likely to want all the money I can get. As for paying the rate, that is all nonsense; I can't do it, and I won't: but 't is the not having my own rent paid that puzzles me. I have not had so much as a doubt about it these four years. I do n't see but what we must turn out when our landlord chooses to turn us out."

"Where?"

"Into the workhouse, I suppose."

"Oh dear! I suppose, husband, rather than

that, you would go out fishing without so much minding the weather—you would not have a child of yours born in the workhouse!"

Monk believed that many as good as he had had children born in the workhouse, and thought no harm of it. All he knew was, that he could pay neither rent nor rate; and rate enough was like to be wanted to answer for Barry's mad pranks. It was said he had refused to make payments to a distance in favor of those who had settlements at Weston; offering to take all home who could not do without relief: so, if half a dozen families came back into the workhouse, to save the little that was now paid to a distance—"

"The little! why, it is upwards of fifty pounds a year."

"Well, if it be, how will you maintain four or five families on fifty pounds a year?"

"If they should choose to come, indeed, it would look something like waste then. I suppose our better sort of rate-payers will be making more haste than ever to places that are less burdened."

"To be sure they will, and leave us the burden."

"We being ourselves part of the burden; you and I, grown up and hearty, as much as these young orphan things. Well, if each could bear his own burden, I could fancy I might reconcile myself to it very well; paying

our own rent, and somehow getting bread for our own children; but as to making us bear a part of other people's burdens, I can't think what Mr. Barry means by proposing such a thing, except that it reminds me of what Miss Emily was saying, that the parish is not an empty name, but made up of them and us, and all that live in it; and that we are all equally bound to help the helpless, as far as we can; the poorest as well as the richest. This may be Mr. Barry's reason for rating us all; and this is the way, perhaps, to find out who are the helpless."

And as she looked at her stout husband lifting Ben out of his way with the left hand, and shifting his boat with an application of the right foot, Mrs. Monk thought her husband would scarcely like to be called, in so many words, one of the helpless.

CHAPTER III.

QUEEN ELIZABETH'S HOSPITALITY.

It appeared, in course of time, that Mr. Barry had fully possessed certain of his neighbors of his wishes and designs with respect to the parish poor; for there were some who expressed neither surprise nor dismay at what

astonished others not a little, and who did not attempt what was expected of them in opposition to the new plans.

There had been reports current for several days about the expected arrival of a new governor of the workhouse, on the departure of all but the able-bodied paupers for Weston, when it was made known in Hurst that the present Thursday was the oddest pay-day that had ever been known in the hamlet.

Monk had been to ask for his quarter's rent, thinking it as well to avoid all notice of what he had heard of the intention of making no more such payments. Mr. Barry had told him that the law did not authorize this mode of relief. Monk had declared himself unable to pay it, and had been offered an order for the workhouse, for himself and his family, as the only assistance offered by the law to those who could not provide themselves a shelter. Monk had muttered something about the magistrates, and departed very angry at being offered the workhouse, though he had talked to his wife about claiming it.

Hornman, the laborer, had asked, as usual, for the half-crown and two eighteen-pences necessary to make up his wages, and had been taken by surprise with a refusal. On pleading the invariable custom, since he had been a farmer's laborer, of supplying from the parish-fund the bread which his wages would

not buy for his children, he was told that this bread might be had in the workhouse, if he chose to go there with his family; good bread, and plenty of it, clean clothing and lodging, to be paid for by the work to be done in the workhouse-yard. Hornman thought it out of the question to give up his employment, and eight and six-pence a week, in order to get relief, and was informed that he might then refuse it. He might shift for himself out of the house, or be provided for in it; but to allow him to unite the advantages of the two ways of living would be an injustice to the independent laborer.

The next man who applied declared that he and his young wife must starve if their five shillings were withheld, and made no scruple about entering the house; for which an order was therefore immediately supplied. A number of idle persons followed his example, knowing that it was considered no bad lot to live in Hurst workhouse, where the people had hitherto been allowed to do pretty much what they pleased, and whither many would have gone, long ere this, but for the convenience of receiving their pay at home. They found to-day, however, that their notions were not at all suitable to the actual state of things.

The doors were thrown open to them without the slightest hesitation, and Millar, the new governor, received them kindly.

"You will find every thing comfortable, I hope, as long as you are obliged to be here; and I shall be happy to give any information which may help you to employment, and release you again. Meantime, you will find your work ready for you in the yard. I will show it you when you have changed your dress: and my good woman will take charge of your wife. Walk that way, friend, and you will find Mrs. Millar waiting to give you your dress."

So there was to be a workhouse dress! that was a new fancy: and what might the work be?

"Stone-cutting, and a daily portion allotted to each man."

But Adams could not cut stone; it was hard work, and he had never tried it.

"Try it now, then; and if you cannot do it, there are bones to be broken. You shall have a hammer; and any body can break bones: but the stone-cutting is the superior sort of work."

"And what is my wife to do while I am breaking bones?"

"She will be employed with the other women, at their side of the house. Mrs. Millar will see that she has what she wants, in the way of work and every thing else. Now move on, if you please; and when you are washed and dressed, I shall have done speaking to the people behind you."

It was so long since Adams had been in so clean a place, that he looked round him with some degree of awe, and walked as if he trod on eggs. The most splendid carpet could not have felt more strange to his feet than the well-scrubbed boards; and no furniture could have excited his wonder more than the long row of white deal tables which stretched from end to end of the eating apartment. Not a speck, or a crack, or a cobweb was to be seen along the whole range of the whitewashed walls; and the lattices, as clear as the air itself, afforded a fine view of the perspective of the cement lines of the outer wall.

When he had beautified himself with soap and water, to a degree which he had not practised since his mother taught him how to dress on a Sunday morning, Adams walked back through the same solemn silence, vexed at the creaking of his prodigious workhouse shoes; made to last as long, apparently, as he could possibly abide in the place.

The silence remained no longer than during his passage to the yard; where there was the grating of the saw, the thumping of the bone-hammer, and almost every other sound that could be anticipated, except that of loud voices. This, they were informed, could be no more permitted in the yard of a workhouse than of a farm or curing-house. Such conversation as did not hinder their own or other

people's business, they were welcome to; but order was the rule of the house. Under this permission, nothing remained but to grumble over that hardest work of all—work which brings no disposable pay.

Adams had soon had enough of it. The stone-cutting shook his arms to the shoulder-blade, he declared; and the bone-breaking seemed as likely to break his bones as those on which he was employed; his back would never stand it. One other choice remained; there was the corn-mill in the shed. On hearing of the corn-mill, five or six joined Adams in choosing that kind of work; hoping that there would not be room for more than half of them, so that the other half might take their ease. To their great disappointment, it was found that the handle might be extended to any length, so as to admit the application of any degree of power, and that the entire population of the workhouse, when fullest, might be employed in grinding corn. Another provoking circumstance was, that the grinders had not the amusement of seeing the effects of their labor; a partition having been put up between the mill and the handle. This was the fault of some mischievous paupers, preceding the present set. They had thrown dirt and pebbles into the corn, and thus compelled the governor to exclude their successors from the sight of their own work. It was

not his fault that they worked at their handle like blinded horses in a mill.

No mill-horse ever tossed his head and shook his sides with more satisfaction on being unharnessed than these paupers made their way to the dinner-table, on the bell being rung. There was something, however, in the aspect of the apartment which at once quieted their glee. The cleanliness and order put them in mind of Sunday; of the old Sundays, which they did not like to look back upon; and there was nothing very tempting in the share of bread and mug of water which was set for each man. There was quite enough food for the most hungry laborer that ever longed for his dinner; yet where was the beer?

No beer was allowed in the workhouse. The laborers out of doors found it difficult to get beer; and why should the paupers, whom they helped to support, expect it?

No beer! Was ever such a thing heard of? Then they would make haste and finish eating, that they might have time to smoke a pipe before they set to work again.

Not so: tobacco was even more out of the question than beer. How should their neighbors out of doors afford to give away luxuries, when they could barely get necessaries for themselves?

Great was the wonder what Goody Gidney

would do without her snuff, and Adams' poor old father without his pipe; and all the aged women up at Weston without their tea. Much was said about cruelty, much that might have been spared, for it was presently explained that tobacco, beer, and tea were allowed at Weston. It was granted that the aged, who had become unable to do without the little luxuries which they had earned for themselves in their better days, ought to be cheerfully supplied with these things, under the calamity of becoming paupers in their time of helplessness, but it was declared that all indulgences should be disdained by the strong who could not earn them.

As there was nothing to be done at table but to eat bread and drink water, under the eye of the governor, every one was rather glad of the signal to be moving again. Several had already begun tattooing the floor or the benches with heels and knuckles, and one or two seemed half asleep, when their munching was done; while certain fidgety persons near swung first one leg and then the other over the bench, leaned first one elbow and then the other on the table, and finally folded their arms and gazed all about for something to look at. These jumped up, like schoolboys from their lessons, when the half hour was up; but not all to hasten to work.

"I can't work any more to-day, sir; that

confounded grinding has half broke my back; I can't work any more to-day."

"I am sorry for that. You can't eat any more to-day, then."

"Lord! sir; I must have my supper."

"Certainly, if you earn it. Not without." And this was all that could be got out of Mr. Millar.

"I can't work any more to-day, sir," declared another; "I am not fit for work."

"I am sorry for that; what is the matter?"

"I am not well; no more fit for that work than a man just out of Barham hospital."

"The doctor will call presently, and he shall see you. You can wait here till he comes."

The patient thought that the fresh air of the yard would be better for him than being alone in a room; but till the doctor ordered fresh air, the quiet airy room was considered by the governor to be the better place.

"If you will show me where I am to sleep, sir, I should like that better."

"You can't be quieter than you will be here till supper-time; and we do not allow going up and down stairs during the day. How long have you been ill?"

"O, I am often ill, with a pain of my own; I can't work when I have it bad."

"It has come on since noon, I think, has it not?"

"Why, yes, in part. 'T is very bad now."

"Well, the doctor will soon be here. You can keep as quiet as you please till he comes."

The doctor came, and considered that there was no immediate danger, general as this pain of the inside seemed to be. He thought an emetic this afternoon, and plenty of camomile-tea to-morrow, would most likely send it away for a good while. He would probably have been proved right, if the case had continued as bad as when he saw it; for the mere sight and scent of the emetic restored the patient to his place at the corn-mill, and prevented any return of the pain for that day.

The corn-mill was unavoidably noisy, like other corn-mills, and there were some delicate personages among these paupers who could no more abide noise than some others could reconcile themselves to quietness. While one was telling his neighbor that he would not stay to be sent to sleep with dullness over his meals three times a day, another vowed he would not remain to have his head shaken to pieces with the grating of the mill. Others had misgivings of a different kind.

"I say, Jem, what 's to be the end of all this?"

"No end, that I see. Here we may work away, I suppose, sawing and sawing, grinding and grinding, as long as we have to stay."

"Without ever seeing the color of money

for all our pains! Well, work is work everywhere; but it is twice as hard where one gets nothing for it."

"Except such food as one can mostly manage to get without being kept in a prison for it. I had rather have half a meal, and eat it where and how I please, than a whole one in a prison. I have no notion of being made a prisoner because I am poor; I won't stand it. I will go and tell the governor so."

"And so will I; and it is odd if my wife is not of my mind by this time, if they deal with the women as they deal with us. My wife won't consent to go without her tea, I will answer for her. I'll go and see."

The governor came as soon as called, to be told that it was a very wicked thing to imprison people because they are poor; to which he fully agreed.

"Then why do you make prisoners of us, sir? All because we are poor."

"I always thought that a prison was a place where people were put in and kept in without their will; which is not the case here. You asked to come in; and if you choose to go away again, nobody hinders you."

"I'll take you at your word, sir, and go; I'd rather do any body's work than yours, any day, and have my liberty."

"With all my heart: if you can get other work, you have no business to be here. If

you cannot, you will be thankful for having this place to come to, to earn food and shelter. As soon as you think you can get work, I would advise you to go. The doors will be open to-morrow morning."

"I'll go to-night, now, before the hour strikes."

"You know that you cannot. The overseer told you that our gates are opened only once a day."

"But you can bid them be opened."

"Certainly not, to let folks out at night to come back in the morning. The doors are open once a day. Go or stay, as you please: but whichever you do, you make your choice for the day. And now, if you mean to have your supper, it is time you were earning it."

"Where is my wife? I want to speak to her?"

"She is at her work; you will have time to learn her mind in the morning, before you go."

There was no resource but work, as before, or idleness and hunger; so back to the corn-mill went the complainers. Those who were not complainers—the very few who had come into the house because they really could not find a living out of it—worked silently and steadily, as a means of getting bread. They did not turn aside at every noise that made itself heard from without, above the creaking and grating of their machine.

"Hark! what is that?" cried Adams, as the

thump of a drum, and the squeak of a fife, and the melody of an organ penetrated the workshed.

"Music agoing to the next fair, that is to be held to-morrow," answered Jem; "there 's to be a fine donkey-race on the green, the first thing in the morning. Scott's donkey has been in training this fortnight."

Adams cursed himself if he would have come in these two days if he had known that. Now he could not get out till morning; and ten to one it was time enough to see the race. He knew that, formerly, no people were gayer at the fairs than those that came from the workhouse, and he saw no use in keeping them mewed up. He proposed that a general and very urgent request should be made to Millar to permit a holyday to take place next day, and the gates to be opened from an early hour.

Millar had made up his mind to answer all demands patiently, till the plan of the workhouse had become sufficiently known to preclude them. He replied, that while some who supported the workhouse were unable to cease their labor and take pleasure for a single day, it was out of the question that inmates of the house should make merry. They had no business, that he could perceive, with organ and drum within the gates, and he would not allow them to be hailed; so organ and drum,

passed on, and the grumblers returned to their work, astonished to find that pauperism was any hinderance to gayety.

In the morning, before the hour of opening the gates, the workhouse coats were, for the most part, thrown contemptuously into a corner, and the shoes stood upon one another in a heap; the men, and some of the women, were walking impatiently about the yard, teazing to be let loose; and when, at last, the word was given, they rushed through the portal, with ideas about pauperism very different from what they had had when they entered, twenty-four hours before. The few whom they left behind repaired to their work with a heavy heart, thankful to be saved from starvation, but hoping not long to owe their subsistence to legal charity.

Of the escaped paupers, some ran to witness the donkey-race and other spectacles of the fair; trusting to get a meal and a lodging for that day, and to find work the next. Two went to lodge a complaint with colonel Lee, the magistrate; alleging that the overseer had, in the one case, refused the weekly allowance, invariably given till now, and in the other declined paying rent as requested. Colonel Lee inquired whether all assistance had been refused; and on being informed that the workhouse was offered in each instance, pronounced that nothing further could be claimed by

law, and that no pretence remained for summoning the overseer. He comforted the applicants by hints that he thought theirs a hard case, but considered himself obliged to observe the letter of the law as carefully in the instance of an overseer as in that of paupers. The time was not yet come for him to perceive that the interests of a third party—the parish—interests outweighing those of paupers and overseer together, require also the strict administration of the law in question.

These two applicants carried back news of their defeat to their expecting brethren; some of whom were in favor of an appeal to another magistrate. As it appeared likely, however, that the neighboring magistrates were all in a "conspiracy" against the paupers, it was judged better to enter into a counter-conspiracy against the overseer; and, till it could be matured, it was resolved to show the governor that they could and would have beer and tobacco, for all his tiresome good-natured looks and wise sayings.

In pursuance of this resolution, one bethought himself of the felling going on this week in colonel Lee's woods, and wondered whether employment could not be got in barking the trees. The colonel was propitious, his forester not objecting; and by dinner-time, two of the paupers of yesterday were busy amid blows as noisy as ever bone-ham-

ever made, and at an occupation as fatiguing as grinding any kind of corn unmixed with pebbles. Another met a woman, belonging to a village four miles inland, with a basket full of limpets for sale. It occurred to him, that if limpets were worth fetching from a distance of four miles, he might probably make enough by them in Hurst, or, at least, in the neighboring fair, to furnish his share of the intended pipe and pint per man. Down to the rocks he hastened, while the tide was yet low; and he might be seen dabbling in pools, slipping about on moist sea-weed, and picking the fish from every crevice, till he had filled his hat and his pockets. While thus employed, he was made to turn and look up by an extraordinary commotion among the sea-birds; an unusual number of which fluttered about him, or settled on the surface of the water, at safe distance from the shore, balancing themselves on the undulations, as if wholly at ease and careless of what the spoiler was doing about their homes. This spoiler was one who was come to rob the sea-fowl, because he was not permitted to rob his parish. With his pipe and pint, and spite against the governor in prospect, he was swinging, clambering, leaping, and prying, with no small success, in his search after eggs: a success which would have furnished himself and his assistants with a dinner, even if the invalids and epicures of

the neighborhood had not purchased the dainty at a price which left something over when dinner was paid for.

The last who remained idle, and likely to be hungry, was Jem Collins. He had not ingenuity to think of any new plans, and not such a character for diligent toil as would induce any one to employ him when others were at liberty. When he found that he was not wanted at felling and barking, and that farmer Rickman did not desire his services, the only device he could suggest to himself was to go and pay a dutiful visit to his grandmother, in the workhouse at Weston, and take the chance of partaking of her dinner. It was some trouble to walk to Weston; but he began to consider what a good thing it was that the old folks were permitted to receive their friends, instead of being shut up like the able-bodied paupers at Hurst. By this means, he might get a sup of beer or tea sometimes, when he must otherwise go without; and might, at the same time, gratify his grandmother with the sight of the lad she was so fond of. She was very apt at hoping that he would grow up a credit to the parish that reared him; and he had so far fulfilled her trust, that he was, at twenty years old, six feet two inches high.

Jem Collins met with something by the way which made him postpone his filial duty for

an hour. In traversing the marsh which lay between Hurst and Weston, he took it into his head to quit the usual path, and strike across an expanse of rushes, which he thought would save him a few steps. A little bare head popped up from the rushes on one side of him, and a blue pinafore peeped out from the other, and immediately after a scream of joy told him that he was "Jem Collins, Jem Collins," that Betsy had not seen she did not know when. They used to play together, and have plenty of fun in the workhouse at Hurst; but Betsy's removal to Weston had interrupted the acquaintance, which she was now delighted to renew.

Betsy had come down into the marsh with Harriet and Ben, after school, for the purpose of gathering rushes for candles, while they plucked their usual quantity of grass for plat ting. The brother and sister had finished gathering the grass, and were now preparing a present of rushes for Mrs. Monk. All three had been merry together, till Jem Collins came; but he engrossed Betsy's attention, so that her companions were left to amuse and help one another as they might. She no longer heard when appealed to as to which of two rushes she should guess to be the longest, without measuring, and she pushed Ben away when he obligingly came to point out how to look for the finest tufts. Ben's temper was

not made to bear this. He flung himself round on his heel, and seemed on the point of vowing never to gather another rush.

"What a shame of Betsy to behave so to you!" cried Harriet; "she well nigh drove you into the mud."

"Never mind her," said Ben, restored in a moment, by seeing that he was cared for; "that is always the way with her, because she can't bear me."

"O, Ben!"

"O, she is very fond of you; she tells Jane Scott how you lend her things, and all that."

"Does she, really?"

"But she can't abide me; she says she can't."

"If I thought that—" Harriet began flinging down her handful, while Ben went on proving his point, till he had worked her up to a determination never to say another word to Betsy. The brother and sister turned their backs to the two who stood gossiping at a distance, and grew into excessive good-humor with each other, while quarrelling with a sinning companion. They each pressed their best rushes upon each other. Ben helped to disengage Harriet's pinafore from a brier, and Harriet frightened away a frog which had made Ben start, and without showing that she saw the start. They became very confidential also in their chat.

"I wonder what I lent Betsy," said Harriet; "I do n't know any thing I have got to lend but what I have in school, and that is not mine; so it is not so very good-natured."

"O, but it is," protested Ben; "because there are several that won't lend in school. That was what Betsy meant; and it is very true, though she is such a cross thing."

"Do you think any body else thinks me good-natured? I wonder whether they think so at home."

"Yes, they do," pronounced Ben; "I heard them say something to one another once."

"Did you?—when?—what about?—what was it?"

"O, it was just after we came to them, when you were lifting up Fred and lifting him down again, and he would not be satisfied; I heard them say that they had a good bargain of you for Fred's sake."

"Which said it?—what were the words?"

"O, that is all I remember. Did you ever hear them say any thing about me?"

"No, never: but I am sure, if you had any thing to give away, they would say you were very generous. But I did hear something; our governess whispered one day that you had a very pretty color when you had been running."

Ben could not help smirking at this; but he immediately wished he had something to

give away. Harriet sympathized entirely in this. She thought it must be so very nice to give charity. She wondered whether Ben had ever thought of such a thing as she had often wished, and never told any body—she did not think she could tell any body.

"O yes; you will tell me."

"No; I don't think I can tell any body—I never did."

"O, do, do! tell me, tell me, dear."

This last word—an unusual one from Ben's lips—together with the feeling of his arm round her neck, opened Harriet's heart entirely; she half choked between eagerness and shame as she said, "I should like to get up very early one morning, and go about doing good."

"O, so should I!" cried Ben, instantly firing, so as to make her glad she had told; "I wonder whether we could get out without any body hearing us?"

"I think I could jump down from the window; and you need not wake Fred."

"Then what should we do first?"

"We might go and ask Mrs. Scott whether she wanted any thing that we could do for her. And if she was not up, I think I could get her pitcher, and fill it at the spring, so that she would find it at the door full, instead of having to go herself. Perhaps, if you looked into the houses as you went along, you

might see some baby that was ill, and we might stop its crying. I know how to stop a baby crying, unless it is very bad indeed. And then we might meet an old blind beggar-man that could not get over the land-springs by himself; you might help him over, and lead him safe up the down, while I was hushing the baby."

"But those are all such little things: I should like—"

"O, so should I, if we could—I should like to find out some people that are almost starving, and carry them whatever they want."

"There are so many people that are almost starving, and they never do quite starve. No: I should like to take people to the fair, and buy whatever they took a fancy to, and a great deal more; I would buy—"

"But you know, Ben, we have nothing to buy with, except my seven-pence and your five-pence, that the Miss Barrys have; and I don't think we may spend that at the fair till you have got your woollen cap to go to sea in, and I a better pair of shoes for Sundays. O, I do wish we had some money! I wish we could be generous!"

"I am afraid we can't yet; but I am almost tired of hearing our governess and every body tell us about our duty in being grateful to the parish, and trying to keep off the parish. It seems such a little, easy sort of thing to do."

"So it does; but yet they say there are many on the parish that hoped once to do fine things. We must take care of that; for we can't be generous if we keep on the parish you know."

"Can we if we keep off?"

"Perhaps we can. Mrs. Monk says she knew a gentlemen, a very rich gentleman in London, that was once a parish-boy. You may find some grand way of getting rich, and then you will let me live with you—"

"To be sure! It will be yours just as much as mine."

"And we will go out then before breakfast, as early as we like, and do a great deal of good. What shall we carry?"

"What do people want most? But I think others, besides rich people, do a great deal of good."

"Jesus Christ was not rich, for one. I suppose he was very generous. Could we do any thing that he did, do you think?"

"I can't think of any thing," replied Ben, after a pause. "It was not he that gave a cup of cold water to somebody, was it? If it was, it would be something like your filling the pitcher."

"He only told people to do it; but I never recollected that when I talked about Mrs. Scott's pitcher. Here! here is the finest rush we have got yet; you had better put it in the middle of your bundle."

"No; I won't take it. You found it; you must keep it."

This was declared impossible, and the final agreement was to unite the bundles, which really made a fine large one. Ben was unwilling to let the subject drop on which his waking dreams had evidently been of late employed.

"I have often wondered," said he, "whether there is any thing generous in taking care of Fred."

"Not in taking care of him, because we are bound to do it; but there is one thing we might do about Fred that would be generous."

Ben was eager to know what this was; but Harriet seemed to have even more difficulty in speaking out about it than about her favorite scheme. At length her meaning appeared. She thought it would be generous, not only to refrain from cuffing Fred when he was cross, but to smile at him, and help him to be good-humored again. Ben was very near cuffing his sister for saying this; but he remembered his declaration that he would never forgive her if she did not say it, and changed his purpose. Squeezing his hands together at the back of his head, he let out that he knew he was very cross with Fred and every body sometimes; but, then, Fred and every body was very provoking sometimes; which Harriet did not pretend to dispute. She thought

Betsy and Jem Collins very provoking to-day, talking and laughing, without ever thinking about Betsy's old companions. By the bye, a thought struck her; would not it be generous to forgive Betsy and Jem Collins? Ben thought it would, and that it would make the thing better still to offer them the bundle of rushes. Harriet hesitated for a minute about this last effort; but recollecting that Mrs. Monk really did not expect any rushes this day, she could not resist the temptation to do a generous thing.

"I said a little while ago," she observed to her brother, "that I would never speak to Betsy again, for your sake; but you will not mind my speaking to her to tell her that I forgive her, will you?"

Ben turned round to look at the gossiping pair, and gave a breathless sort of permission. Harriet accordingly went up, looking, in her own idea, equally mild and solemn, to tell Betsy that she forgave her.

"You forgive me! What for?"

"For not liking Ben so well as me, and for treating us so this afternoon, and for—"

The most provoking tears in the world would come just at the wrong moment. Jem laughed; Betsy laughed after him; Ben threw his hat at Betsy, and then turned to Jem, saying,

"And I forgive you too for laughing, be-

cause you do n't know any thing about what Harriet means. And you may have these rushes, if you like. They are the best we could find."

"And beauties they are," cried Jem. "Here, Betsy, shall I dress up your hat with them, or shall we play ball with it? 'T is a fine big ball."

"No, no," cried Ben, eagerly. "It will come untied if you toss it up. They are to make candles of. Here, I will show you."

And in all good faith Ben began explaining the process, not at liberty, like Harriet, to perceive the winks which passed between Jem and Betsy. Harriet stood narrowly watching them for some time, and then put her arm on Ben's shoulder, saying,

"They are making game of us all the time, Ben. They do n't care a pin for the rushes."

A more insulting laugh than ever followed this discovery; the laughers running away, hand in hand, and looking behind them to see what became of the rush-gatherers. Harriet slowly took up the bundle, which seemed to be suddenly scorned by Ben as much as by Jem.

"Throw them into the mud," he said. "They are nasty trumpery things, after all."

"Why, so they are; but they will make candles at home just as well as ever; and if

Mrs. Monk does not want them, they will do for litter for Dawson's pig."

"Well, take them home for what I care; but it is all nonsense for us to try to be generous."

"Do n't let us think any more about it to-day," said Harriet, secretly unwilling to give up her aspirations. "I am sure it is full time for us to be home, and we are to have new bread for dinner to-day. I saw Fred sucking the last crust of the old loaf this morning."

Somewhat cheered by this pleasant prospect, they trudged home with their burden between them, not a rush being dropped by the way for Jem to make game of, if he should return by the same track.

Jem did return by the same track; but not till he had escorted Betsy home, accepted from her the loan of a sixpence which somebody had given her for a birthday present, and eaten up two-thirds of his grandmother's dinner while paying his duty to her. He left the old lady with a fine appetite for her tea, and much gratified at her dear lad's approval of her new location. He was as easily convinced as she could desire, that the aged folks were much quieter here than down below; that they could sleep better of nights; that it was a rare view from the yard bench; that nobody grudged them their little comforts, as was the case when a score of rude fellows

were bullying for tea and tobacco; and that, on the whole, the removal had been nothing but a good to the party most concerned. She told a neighbor, while sipping her tea, that there was some pleasure in talking to her boy Jem, who agreed in all that was said, instead of insisting, like some of Goody Gidney's gossips, that the change was altogether a piece of tyranny, such as the whole parish ought to rise up against.

Jem's success in filching his dinner encouraged him in his idea of filching his pipe and drink in the evening. He was punctual in his attendance at the spot where his fellow-paupers of the preceding day were to meet to laugh at the overseer, and beard the governor. They came from their limpet selling, their felling and barking, their egg quest, their collecting of pebbles for the roads, and of sand for domestic purposes, each one with more or less of earnings, either in his pocket in the form of money, in his hand in the shape of a mug of beer, or sticking from the corner of his mouth in the semblance of a tobacco-pipe. They sat down in a ring under the workhouse wall, where they might enjoy the sea-breeze after their labor, and attract the attention of passers by, who might be going down to the shore for similar purposes of refreshment.

There they sat singing in praise of liberty

and malt liquor, taking care that it should not be their fault if the governor did not learn this evening, that freeborn Britons are made to work for themselves, and not for any parish taskmaster on earth. This was a doctrine no more objectionable to the governor than to Mr. Barry, who was coming up from a walk on the beach with his daughters just in time to hear a stanza about himself. He stood in full view, with a daughter on each arm, till the song was finished, laughing as much as any of them at every home stroke, and nodding an approving good night. Millar had seen him from the privileged wicket appropriated to the governor, and slipped out to meet him at the back of the premises.

"The plan seems to work well, so far," observed Mr. Barry. "How many have you left in the house?"

"Thirty; and we breakfasted forty-two this morning. We are to have an influx to-morrow, I hear; and to this we shall be subjected for some time, I suppose, till our system becomes better known."

"Ay, and you will have much trouble with them yet awhile, I fear. You may have some fiercer spirits to deal with than any of these who have left you to-day."

"Never mind me, sir. Trust me to manage them for a time, knowing as I do that they will be thankful enough for what we are

about when the thousands that have been spent in keeping up this house are at liberty to go into the people's pockets as wages."

"Yes, yes. But we must have much patience, and not look too soon for the time you speak of. We have much to go through first."

"True, sir; I am aware of that. Some of those who have looked for work in a spirit of defiance, will come back upon us when their fit of spite is over, and—"

"And they cannot all live upon such poor chance earnings as they have got to-day."

"No; but, meantime, one day's maintenance has been saved from the pockets of the farmer and the housekeeper, which will supply another day's work. This is something gained. Yes, yes. However little value there may be in the shell-fish and eggs, and other things that have been added to our parish resources to-day, such gains will be valuable enough to us, if they cause the farmers to call for another carter or ploughman each, and the housekeepers for each an extra dish of fish once or twice a week."

"And there may be some," observed Miss Barry, "who have learned this day that it is more pleasant to work than to depend on the parish."

"Both in and out of the house, depend upon it, Miss Barry. I have left a poor fellow at

the mill, actually crying at their shouting without. I believe he would be off through the window, if he could, at the first glimpse of a likelihood of getting employment. But he is a bad workman, though willing enough; and I fancy he will be one of the last to leave us."

"Poor fellow! I hope they all meet with vevy different treatment now from what they did under the old system, Millar. The brutal way of speaking to the paupers, and the harshness of the management, always struck me as one of the worst features of the old plan. It was a thing I could never reconcile with the governor's known kindness of heart, and still less with the matron's."

"It was not their fault, sir; it was owing to mixing up such different sorts of people together, and changing plans so often, that harshness was called in to do what method should have effected. The less we are ridden by would-be paupers, the easier it is to be duly kind to real paupers. One need hide one's compassion only so long as it is liable to be made the occasion of abuse and imposture. Take away impostors and encroachers, and real paupers will be regarded as people should be who are suffering under a very grievous and humbling misfortune. For my part, as I was saying to my wife, there are few kinds of misfortune that I pity more: and her an-

swer is, that if the true misery and humiliation of it were known, there would be fewer pretenders to it, and fewer aiders and abettors of it."

"I am quite of your wife's opinion, and I hope the whole parish will be so too before long. Meantime, I have no doubt the poor fellows may feel themselves well off in your hands. You will always bear in mind the rule that they are to have whatever comes below the limit of what is enjoyed by the independent laborers who help to support them. This is the limit prescribed by justice, and therefore by true charity; and this limit can never exclude personal respect and kindness, which are the due of the pauper, as of every other man."

CHAPTER IV.

IMPORTANT TRIFLES.

About a month after this time, Harriet got up very early one morning, and went out,—whether to do good, she could not at all determine within herself. She was afraid that some mischief might arise from her proceeding; but the Miss Barrys were such good ladies, and had been so kind to Mrs. Monk and the family, that it seemed wrong not to

tell them of any thing which concerned their father very nearly. They would tell her too whether she was doing right or wrong, and then she should know another time.

Miss Emily was only half-dressed when Harriet arrived, and Miss Barry was not up. Instead of making their little visiter wait or go away again, however, the young ladies showed their respect for the value of her time by admitting her to their dressing-room to tell her story. Her story was, that she was not quite asleep, the night before, when Monk came in from his evening gossip, and told his wife something that Harriet thought Mr. Barry ought to know, though she was sure Monk did not intend her to repeat it. Ought she to tell, or not?

Was it about public or private business?

Public, altogether. It was about the workhouse.

This being the case, Miss Emily thought Harriet should tell, as nobody could possibly have any proper private interest in the workhouse affairs, and the welfare of the whole parish was concerned in them. So Harriet told that a vigorous push was to be made next week to drive out the new system, and get back the old plans of allowance, rent paying, &c. It was agreed in the hamlet, that every laborer in the two hamlets who had a fancy for any parish assistance should demand on a

certain day to be admitted into the workhouse. Now, the workhouse could, by no possibility, be made to hold two-thirds of the number who had already entered into the conspiracy; and it was considered certain that Millar must declare his hands to be full, and that Barry must consent to give relief as the people liked best to have it. Monk already began to talk of having his rent paid for him next quarter, though Harriet thought his wife did not wish it, but had rather see him go out fishing a little oftener, and have something better to do with an odd sixpence than to spend it as he did when there was nothing to lay by for.

"He did manage to pay his rent last quarter, did not he?"

"O yes, miss; and my mistress says, that if he once reconciled himself to the new plan, he would be as sorry as any body that it should be given up. The little he would have to pay in rate—"

"Which would grow less and less, till it came to almost nothing."

"Yes, miss; that little would be much more than made up to him by several people staying and buying his fish, that talked of going away when the rates were so high. If he lost three or four of his customers, the parish must do more than pay his rent to make it up to him."

"They will stay now, I have very little

doubt; for they begin to see that the rates are falling already, and are much more likely to fall when all are agreed to act upon the new plans. I will tell my father what you have let me know; but I believe he is prepared for all the opposition that can be planned against him. You see how quietly the workhouse people go to church now; and you know how they threatened at first to take a run on the down instead."

"Just as if they ought not to go to church like other people, my mistress said; and the more for being in a state of misfortune. But I suppose the better sort liked to drop into church unobserved; and the worse, to make Sunday a pretence for going to some place that they liked better than church. My mistress says I shall not be able to go to church, miss, for the few Sundays that I am to be manager."

"Manager of what?"

"Of Fred, and every thing, when my mistress is confined, miss. She is going to have nobody to nurse her but me, except just at first; and she thinks that so she can make the money do that you have of hers, without meddling with the rent, and—"

"So Mrs. Monk tells you of all these things, Harriet; so she tells you that we have money of hers. Well, you are growing a great girl, now, and you should be showing yourself a help to your mistress."

"I could not be a manager for her without being told these things. I am most afraid about my master's coming home, and not finding all as it should be."

"If you do your best to have it so, he will make allowance, I dare say, and remember that you are a very young housekeeper."

"That won't prevent his saying what he is always saying to Ben and me. We are weary of hearing it; and it puts Ben out more than any thing; so that I am always watching for it. He is forever saying that we must go back to the workhouse."

"He means less unkindness, perhaps, than a person might who thought more ill of the workhouse than he does. Mr. Monk seems to think the workhouse the proper place for poor people."

"And my mistress is mortally afraid we should get used to hear of going back, and so not mind it. But it is not that that I am afraid of, so much as what Ben may do. He says if we can keep on a bit longer as we are, he can get out to sea, in one of the Newfoundland ships, or somehow."

"Leaving you to shift for yourself?"

"When he has once made sure of my not going back to the workhouse; he would not go till he had seen me in service, or somewhere safe. But I tell him that, there being only us two, it will be odd if we must live on

the two sides of the world. If my master would cease his talk about the workhouse, Ben would be very well content to be a fisherman; for he has no further desire after the sea."

"And what sort of service would you like?"

"I've no great mind to any; but perhaps that is because I am not fit for any. I like dandling children, and teaching them to do things for themselves; and so, if I was any thing of a servant, I would be a nursemaid. But then there is the ironing of babies' caps: I could not do that; I am sure I dare not touch a lace border. The last time my mistress spoke sharp to me was about running the heater through the crown of Fred's nightcap."

"And have you mended it?"

"O, miss, it was too bad for mending, ever so much. I was like to thrust it into the fire before she saw it, I was in such a fright; but Ben came in."

"And he made you ashamed of wanting to burn it?"

"He took it to my mistress, and she was less sharp with me for having been sharp upon him first."

"And how did Ben like that?"

"Why, when Ben is put out, it is commonly when he has been more or less wrong himself. He was not put out then, except that he thought she said more than she need. But it

was almost a new cap, and quite spoiled; and the thing that my mistress least likes is to have to lay out money just now. However, I put her off from it, about the caps, and Fred will soon have his cap again now; I have got all but the strings, and I can finish the making in two more mornings; and might have done it to-morrow, but for the coming here to-day. If farmer Rickman will give us three halfpence for as many rushes as we can get this afternoon for litter, I can buy the tape for the strings as I come home; for Ben will wait for his three farthings, he says: he will not be easy, any more than I, till the cap is done."

"Well, I hope you will have paid both your debts before the end of the week, so as to have quite an easy mind on Sunday. Now try to fasten my gown, and let me see what kind of a lady's maid you would make."

Harriet blushed and laughed as she laid aside her bonnet, and applied her stout fingers to the slender buttons of the lady's dress. She laughed yet more at the bare notion of her ever curling and dressing a lady's hair. She had been taught to crop Ben's hair, and keep it close cut; but this she thought was a very different thing from curling Miss Emily's; in which she was undoubtedly right.

"It is well you should learn to use your fingers' ends about small things," observed Miss Emily; "for there will be a young baby soon

at home for you to help to take care of; and you little think, I dare say, how much a baby's temper and comfort depend on having its things put dexterously off and on. You have been more used to lift the boiler and scrub the floor, I fancy, than to manage a tender infant. How do you think you shall get through till your mistress is about again?"

"She has told me all I shall have to do, and—".

"Come, tell me about it. But it is a pity your cap is not here, for us to be going on with while we talk."

In great glee, Harriet lifted up her apron and showed her workbag under it. She had had no distinct idea of doing any thing to the cap while at Miss Barry's; but she could not bear to be parted from such a treasure as this article of her own buying and making. She laid it under her clothes when she put them off at night, and wore it under her apron all day long.

"Give it me," said Miss Emily, "and I will do a piece for you; it is only fair, as I keep you talking here."

Harriet's countenance fell—she was bent upon doing every stitch of it herself; but her respect for Miss Emily would not let her say so in any other way than by being suddenly melancholy.

"Does Mrs. Monk put a full border upon

her child's nightcaps?" asked Miss Emily. "I wonder she finds time to iron them—to say nothing of the making."

"No, no, miss, Fred's caps have no border in general; but I had a mind to make this a bit prettier than the one I burned. Don't you think it is prettier with a border, Miss Emily?"

"That depends very much upon how the border is put on. I doubt whether this will ornament Fred's cheeks. Who taught you to full on a border, Harriet?"

"Nobody. I looked close at my mistress' cap one day; but I know this is not so neat."

"Would you like to learn to do it better—shall I pick this off, and show you the way?"

"It won't be done by to-morrow, then, ma'am, will it?"

"Perhaps not; but it will be better worth giving away the next day."

"Ben reckoned so on its being done to-morrow; I don't know what he would say."

"I think I do, if Ben is the boy I take him for; he would say that you have no right to give an untidy cap in exchange for a tidy one."

"Why; that's true. I did not think of that before. I shall thank you much, miss, for doing the unpicking; but—"

"But you wish the work to be all your own. So it shall be. Bring me that work-box. There is a border of mine there, that you may

learn upon; and then you can do every stitch of your own yourself."

As the lesson proceeded, Harriet was astonished to see how handsome her border would look when half its breadth was not taken up with the clumsy roll, which, when starched, (as it was to be, at least on its first appearance,) would prove a perpetual irritation to Fred's temples.

"How will you manage about buying things when you are a housekeeper, Harriet? Are you clever at getting articles good and cheap?"

"I have mostly got what I was sent for without having to choose. When one is sent for a quarter of an ounce of tea, one can hardly miss; and the same with butter for breakfast: and that is the sort of buying I have been used to."

"But you will not have time to run up to the shop every time Mrs. Monk will want a cup of tea, or a slice of bread and butter."

"No, miss; and so she says she will make a great shopping one day soon; thinking she cannot spend some of her money better. She will get oatmeal enough for all the gruel wanted for the month, and a pound of sugar, and as much tea as she can afford after that. The meat and the bread she must trust to me to buy; but it would not do to be running out every meal-time, when the baby must not be left."

"Certainly; nor yet to pay for the grocer's paper and string for ten times as many parcels as need be made up; nor yet to have the tea ground down to dust with constant weighing, so that you are tempted to put a third more than is wanted into the pot; to say nothing of the untidiness and waste of having scraps always about—a dry bit of cheese, and a soft bit of butter, and a little dust of tea which nobody relishes, and every body may be tempted to put out of the way. Any man would be glad to see his half dozen scraps turned into a respectable wedge of cheese or pat of butter, and the pinches of brown sugar at the bottoms of three or four cups collected in a jar; and yet they let their wives go on buying in the smallest quantities they can get."

"If they have not the money at hand, miss, what can they do? as my mistress says. It is only when she is going to be confined, or on some such particular occasion, that she can get money enough to buy more than is just wanted for the day. My master will have tea; and my mistress has never money enough for more than a quarter of an ounce at a time, considering the sugar."

"Well, Harriet, if you can once manage to get the sugar for two days on the Monday, and the tea for two days on the Tuesday, the time may soon come when you can buy tea

certainly would be) to call Mr. Day a poor person, she could not at once make out. She wondered whether the difference lay in reckoning income by the week or by the year. She presently recollected that it was in her power to stock the house with one article, at least, before the days of her housekeeping. Did not Miss Emily think that candles burn down much quicker when fresh made, than when they have been kept some time? No doubt, and especially when made in summer. Ah! it was too late now to make any but a summer batch for this year; but Harriet thought she could prepare a sufficient stock for the nights when a light must be burning in Mrs. Monk's room from dark till sunrise. This was approved. But could she make broth, and boil potatoes? O dear! Harriet thought every body could do that. No such thing. Miss Emily had seen as much meat wasted in the making of broth as would have fed a child; and both the rich and poor would retain their relish for potatoes much longer than they do, if cooks, lofty and lowly, did their duty by them. Miss Emily had seen a slovenly fisherman's wife very lately let down the fire under her pot of broth, till it became necessary to use chips (a very expensive article) and blow the fire; a practice which wastes as much fuel as time. At length the water boiled away at such a rate, that there

was fear the liquid would be all gone before the good man came home to his dinner; so the lid was taken off, giving entrance to the smoke; cold water was poured in to check the boiling from time to time; and the whole came upon table, at length, a curious compound of hard vegetables, sodden, tasteless meat, and water, flavored equally with smoke and salt. As for potatoes, they were often pronounced waxy in texture and disagreeable in taste, when they need be neither the one or the other, if they were but set on in cold water instead of hot, and left to drain in the steam for a few minutes before being brought to table. A steamer to fit upon the saucepan might be bought presently for the value of the distasteful potatoes that are thrown into the ash-hole, or to the pigs. By the by, Miss Emily had heard her father remark that he had never seen so few pigs in any neighborhood as about Hurst. How was it? Was there any reason why fishermen's cottages should not have a sty at the back, as well as country laborers?

Harriet could only answer for the views of the people she lived with. Mrs. Monk had talked of a pig again and again; and Ben and Harriet had offered to feed and water it; but Monk never would hear of it. He did not see why they should be plagued with a grunter, when all that they would get by it would be that

the parish would refuse to pay the owner's rent, on the plea that he had property.

"But there is an end of that reason now that his rent is paid for him no longer."

"Yes: and my mistress let drop one day lately that she should like to get a young pig in the early part of next year, and try if she cannot keep him so as to kill her own bacon the winter after. She has no doubt my master would find a bit of cold bacon a good relish at sea; and she promises he shall have none of the trouble of a pig."

"I rather think we shall see a few more grunters poking about among the boats before long," observed Emily. "There are many besides Monk who have been afraid of seeming too comfortable, for fear of the parish leaving off helping them. Two or three, who have made up their minds that my father is the most obstinate man in the world, have managed to get things that they never could afford while they waited on the parish."

"Perhaps that is why the Wilkinses have got the new cupboard put up, with Mrs. Wilkins' grandmother's china teapot in it, that every body thought was sold long ago; as she had not been heard to speak of it since they first went to the overseer. And Hart has put up a beautiful bench, with arms at each end, outside his house, where his wife may sit and net, when she is looking out for his boat.

Ben has got leave to go and see it painted green."

"And I will promise to come and feed your pig when he takes his first meal in his new sty," said Miss Emily, smiling.

"O Miss Emily, may I tell my mistress so, and Ben?"

"O, yes; and your master too, if you like."

"But it will be winter, miss; after Christmas, you know."

"Well! I walk your way in winter as well as summer; and it must be a heavy snow that will prevent my coming to feed your new pig. I hope my sister may be well enough next winter to go down and watch the boats putting off and coming in. It is a sight she is very fond of."

"O, miss! O dear! if we had a bench, like Hart's, for her to sit on, out of the wind when it blows off shore. A bench, painted blue or green. Which do you like best?"

"I think brown looks very neat, and it suits with the other colors about your cottage. But you must get the pig before you think of a bench."

"When I thought of a bench, I thought that Ben and I—But we have something else to do first. Something that—Do you know, Miss Emily, if I make a good manager when my mistress is confined, I am to have a whole day to myself at last, before I go to school again?

Ben and I may do what we like for a whole day."

"I dare say you have made up your minds already what you shall do."

Harriet's conscious smile was a sufficient reply. As she seemed to have some difficulty in abstaining from an explanation of her intentions, while they were evidently meant to be a secret, Miss Emily brought back the discourse suddenly to the nightcap border, which was by this time ready for a fresh experiment.

"You see now, Harriet, how you are to go on with it. Put it by, and run home. You will be in time to wash Fred's face before he eats his crust; and I hope your time has not been wasted, my dear. You have learned something; and you may have done a service, by telling me what you did about the workhouse. Now run home; and take care your heater is not too hot the next time you iron a cap."

When Harriet had so arranged her bag, with its precious contents, and patted down her apron, as to leave no bunch right or left, by which any one might guess at the existence of the nightcap, she was ready to go; and merrily she tripped along, thinking of savory broth and a brown bench, of the difference between roving the down and being shut up in that dismal-looking workhouse, and of the comparative desirableness of sleeping

sound in the dark—as she did all night at present—and sitting in Monk's arm-chair at midnight, with a rushlight burning dimly on the table, and a tender little baby lying across her lap, breaking the silence now and then by a soft squall; which was to be her position, she supposed, some time hence. In the midst of these thoughts, an alarming thing happened. When she reached the brow of the cliff, and before she was on her guard, a puff of wind caught the right-hand corner of her apron, and carried it up, so that all the dwellers on the beach might have seen, if they had chanced to be looking up, that she carried the bag in which was the nightcap. She looked hastily about her, found she was not particularly observed, huddled up the bag in her apron till she should be out of the wind, and hopped, skipped, and jumped down the zigzag path. She presently saw signs of preparation about Monk's boats. Monk himself had on his red and blue cap; a sure token that he was going out. Ben was staggering down under an excessive load of nets and panniers; and little Fred followed, with an empty tin can, which he stopped to ring and jingle against every large stone he passed. Harriet called loud—louder—louder still; but Ben not only did not turn, but swung his leg over the side of the boat, as if about to depart without giving one other look landwards.

"He will be gone! There, he is in! If he would stop just a minute now! Here he comes out again! tucking up his trowsers to run the boat out. I may catch him yet. How he does grow, to be sure! Six months ago he could no more have given such a push as that —I wish he would not tug so hard, and then I should be sure to catch him. There! now he sees me. How tiresome this deep sand is!"

To Ben's questions of where she had been, and what she had been doing, she could give no answer at present, Monk was calling so impatiently. She must just say, that Ben must not expect the cap to be finished the next day, and that she had another grand scheme put into her head to consult him about some time or other. Nothing that they could do just yet, but—

And Ben might make what he could of the "but," till his impatient master should let him talk with his sister in peace and quiet.

CHAPTER V.

DELIGHTS OF OFFICE.

No rushes were gathered, no pennies were gained, no tape was bought this day. steadily

as Harriet had resolved that all these things should be achieved. But it was no new thing to Harriet to be obliged to surrender her purposes, and to make herself happy in some other person's way instead of her own, if she meant to be happy at all. Like many another little girl, it daily happened to her to find herself pinned down to work when she intended to play; to be made to think about the price of potatoes, when she would rather have been reckoning up glittering shells, and flinging about red and green seaweed. Like many another little girl, she was greeted with harsh scoldings, which she was not aware of having deserved, or with wearisome murmurs about little evils which she could not remedy, when she had hoped to be at liberty to listen to the wild music of the sounding shore; or, at her place of play, the down, to the sheep-bell and the herdsman's call; or, at her place of rest, the school, to another Shepherd's call to the weary and heavy-laden. Unlike many another little girl, Harriet could fulfil her own objects amid all these interruptions. She could meet Ben at each turn and winding of her daily course, soothe his suffering at hearing her blamed, and get quietly over it for his sake; show him, when his turn came, that there was one who understood him, while no one else did; plan pleasant things for Fred when he was naughty, to be executed when

he should be good: and, above all, look forward, far beyond present toils, fears, and mortifications, to the day when she might be subject to nobody but Ben; when she need not trouble any body to manage their affairs for them, and when she might bid him God speed in the morning, and have every thing comfortable for him against the evening. Even this day—this anxious, busy day—when the neighbors were coming in and out, and nothing had been bought that ought to have been bought, and all was confusion, for every body seemed ready to blame her, these thoughts found an opening in her crowded heart to come and go, and put her in mind that this strange day would certainly come to an end. It was also necessary to remind herself that this rising gale would blow itself out, and leave a lull which would enable the fishing-boats to return home; and that meanwhile there was One who held the waters in the hollow of his hand, and could still the chorus of winds and waves with a word, when it pleased him rather to listen to the voice of human prayer. The gale rose through the day; and by the time twilight came on, and all was at length still within Monk's cottage, two women's voices were heard from the beach, anxiously calling to one another, till the gusts overpowered them.

Harriet could not go out to learn what her

neighbors thought about the danger of those who were at sea. Her vision of the arm-chair was realized sooner than she expected; and there she was sitting, with the new-born infant on her knees, fearing lest the rushlight should blow out, notwithstanding all her care to shield it from draughts; fearing lest the gruel should not prove so good as it might be made; fearing lest Fred should wake and make a noise; fearing lest Mrs. Monk should take alarm at the storm, and praying incessantly her trembling prayer that her Parent—the Parent of the orphan—would promptly bring back her brother, and meanwhile keep his heart from sinking, as hers did, with every blast. It struck her that the watch of the nurse was not altogether so happy a thing as she had expected; and she was just managing not to cry at the thought, when her mistress called her, and gave her something else to think about.

"Harriet, what o'clock is it?"

"I suppose, past nine. I have been watching for the church clock striking this long while; but the wind is the other way, so that we shall not hear it. But it must be past nine."

"Much more than that, child, surely. Is not the wind very high? one would think that the door and the windows were open, by the splash and the draught."

"They are both shut: but it does blow a little."

"I wonder where you have managed to put the candle; it flickers so, I can't bear it."

"I'll put it in the other room; there may be less of a draught there."

"There is a great smell of smoke—are you sure there is nothing burning?"

"O no; but it happens to be the same wind that always makes our chimney smoke. Your gruel is on, against you would like a little."

Harriet must put down the baby beside its mother, and go and make sure that nothing was burning. Then she must step out, and learn when the last boat came in, and whether it was thought any more could make the land to night. She brought back an opinion that the boats would keep out till daylight. She did not tell that there was not a fisherman's wife of them all who thought of sleeping this night.

"They may come, however," said Mrs. Monk; "so put a light in the window, child. It had better be the tin lamp, if there is any oil in it. A rushlight will not show far enough out."

The flaring lamp was placed in the window; gruel was called for, and found to have a slight flavor of smoke; Harriet was wondered at for having come in with the hem of her frock dripping, and she went and dried

it, refraining from saying that it was impossible to go out at the door without being wetted, as the spray dashed up against the very window of the cottage. If Mrs. Monk had not been curtained up in a corner of the back room, she must have been aware of this; but Harriet was resolved that she should not know it from her.

"When are you going to bed, Harriet?" was the next question.

"Going to bed! I thought I might sit up with you all night."

"How should I go to sleep with you moving about all night?"

"But I am afraid I should not hear you call, if I were to fall asleep."

"You would fall asleep just as much if you sat up, and perhaps let the baby drop too, if you have the fancy to nurse it. No, no. Go to bed."

"So as to be out of the way of knowing any thing about Ben till the morning," thought Harriet, slowly preparing to take off her frock. She was once more called to Mrs. Monk's bedside, to be told of this, that, and the other that must be done the next day.

"And when you have done that, you must —But never mind that now. My dear, I have to beg your pardon, Harriet, for being very cross and very troublesome."

Harriet wanted to say, "No, no," but could

not speak quite as she thought a good nurse should do; so Mrs. Monk went on.

"I believe it is the wind that worries me. But, to be sure, you may say the same; for you must be thinking about Ben, as I am about my husband. But thinking about Ben has not made you cross; so, the more shame for me."

Harriet had just time to say, "No, no," before a kiss startled her—the first kiss for many a long month—a kiss which reminded her strangely of a dimly-remembered time when some one's arms held her, some one's bosom was a warm resting-place for her cheek. What did it now signify whether she lay awake or slept this night?

She did sleep; and sooner than would have been supposed possible by any one who did not know how great had been her fatigue of the day. When she was awakened by the light going out, she found that the gray morning had stolen on so far that there was no need to replenish the lamp, and that, if she could steal out, without disturbing Mrs. Monk, there was a chance of getting some tidings for her by the time she awoke. Fresh blew the morning breeze, and hoarsely rolled the leaden-colored sea, flecked with foam. But there was something which took away her breath more than the wind, and fixed her eye more

than the foam—a boat, laboring in the billows, and making for the land. An old man and a young woman were awaiting it, and while doubtful whether it was theirs or Harriet's, all were full of sympathy for one another. But when it proved to be theirs, there was no time to attend to Harriet. She was forgotten in the ecstacy of watching the contest with the breakers, pushed aside when the boatmen leaped ashore, and with difficulty favored with the news that all that the fishermen had seen since daybreak was a boat at some distance, floating bottom upwards.

Could she, dared she go home? Harriet wondered. Yes, if she could get in without having been missed—without danger of being questioned. She had not been missed, and half an hour after she was called up, as if from sleep, and did her duty by Fred, and the fire, and the floor, as usual. Having turned Fred out to play, she put off the thoughts of breakfast awhile, till she could better bear the idea of something to eat. Presently a neighbor or two came in to hear how Mrs. Monk had passed the night; and one wanted warm water to wash the baby, and another a clean basin for some more gruel. While Harriet was holding out the latter, for the gruel to be poured in, Fred pushed in between her and the neighbor, hugging and coaxing something snow-white.

"Why, Fred, where did you get that sea-gull—who gave you that bird, dear?"

"Ben."

"Ben! Where, where? Where is Ben?"

The child led the way to the door, Harriet at his heels; and thence, assuredly, might be seen Monk and Ben, pulling their boat up on the beach as leisurely as if nothing had threatened them at sea, and nothing awaited them at home. Harriet stole back to her mistress.

"May I just take the baby, and show him to my master? I will wrap him up very warm."

"So, they are back safe! Thank God! My dear, I cannot let the baby go out yet. But you may ask my husband to come and see it, if he does not know already."

When Monk had coolly shaken his dripping arms and legs, before entering his wife's room, Harriet looked to her brother with some degree of awe, for an account of the perils of the past night; but Ben seemed much more full of the rare quantity of fish they had caught in the gale than of the dangers of the gale itself. It must have been a severe one too, for several birds had come up in the nets with the fish; but if Ben had been frightened, he did not choose to say so, or he had forgotten it; and Harriet determined, as she had done once or twice before, never to be in such a panic again.

Monk had business in the hamlet as soon

as he had had his bread, cheese, and beer. Whatever had been his own experience, and that of his neighbors, of late, as to how little was to be had from the parish, he was resolved to lose nothing for want of asking. His business was to demand the weekly allowance for his new-born child; and he did so as if it had been a matter of course, which no one would think of refusing. There was a slight additional chance of succeeding, from the overseer having his hands full of business, and, it was supposed, his head and heart full of perplexity and trouble this day. This was the day of the intended rush to fill the workhouse to overflowing; by which the overseer might be forced to give relief according to some of the old methods. It was true, he had given out, the day before, that two empty houses, which stood a little apart, were to be fitted up as a supplement to the workhouse: but this was scarcely believed till they were seen this morning to be actually open, and that workmen were going in and out. On perceiving this, many of the conspirators were disposed to withdraw; as they had no intention of really submitting to workhouse drudgery and confinement. Some new courage was infused into them, however, by the tidings that colonel Lee and farmer Rickman had been overheard, as they stood talking before the door, to wonder at any man daring so to waste the parish

money as to offer to maintain a whole family, when they only asked for a little help in the way of allowance. Barry had the law with him, certainly; and for a little while he must be allowed his own way; but the sooner such an extravagant fancy was put an end to the better. As for the rate having been so much less within three months, that might be accident; and there was little chance enough of its continuing to decrease, if six people were to be maintained when the support of only one was asked for. These remarks, finding their way from one gossiping group to another in the street, emboldened many to come and ask relief, as they had pledged themselves to do.

"Please, sir," said a farmer's laborer, when four or five applicants had received an order for the workhouse, and one or two had slunk away without, "please, sir, I must have the allowance again for my wife and myself. I 'll say nothing about the children this time; but my wages will not maintain us all. I have brought my certificate, sir."

"What certificate?"

"About what wages I have. Before you were overseer, we always brought certificates from the farmers about the rate of wages for the week. Nine shillings this week, sir."

"I do not ask for any certificates. You are the best judges of whether you want the relief the law offers you; and it is a point I

never dispute. If you choose to give up your work, and go into the house, you shall have an order."

"Please just look at the certificate, sir; and I have neighbors here who will speak to my character."

"I have nothing to do with your character. The law orders the relief of the indigent, without asking about their character. A knave must no more be allowed to starve than an honest man. Will you have an order for the house or not?"

While the man was explaining what a pity it would be that he should throw up his work for so small a sum as he contended for, farmer Rickman came up and looked at the certificate, to which the overseer would pay no attention.

"Do you mean," said he to the applicant, "that Dove pays you no more than nine shillings a week? Did farmer Dove sign this?"

"Yes, sir."

"He might have saved himself the trouble," observed Mr. Barry; "it has nothing to do with our business."

"Besides, I know him to be paying, as I am, fourteen shillings a week."

"That was before he took on so many new hands, sir. He has taken on a half a score within these six weeks."

"And yet pays fourteen shillings a week to laborers of your class, to my knowledge.

Ho! ho! I see! Here is a date very nicely altered. This certificate is a year old, and has been altered for the occasion. Mr. Barry, you will not give this fellow relief."

"That depends on whether he thinks he wants it."

"Lord bless you, sir! what am I to do with nine shillings a week?"

"That is for you to judge of. If you cannot subsist, take this order for the workhouse. If not, make way for the people behind you. If you want time to consider, you may apply again an hour hence. After that, the gates will be shut."

"You will hear no more of him," said Rickman, as the applicant moved off grumbling. "Depend upon it, he has fourteen shillings. It is no new trick bringing these false certificates. It has even been laid to the charge of us farmers, that we have drawn them out falsely, to get our men relieved out of the rate. Whatever others may have done, I never did it. But I wonder you let the fellow off so easily."

Mr. Barry again declared that it was no concern of his, and pointed out that one of the advantages of the new plan was its freeing the administrators of parish affairs from all the odium and responsibility of inquiring into character; which appeared to him to have nothing to do with whether a man should or should not be starved

The next case was one in point. A vagrant applied for funds to pursue his journey to his place of settlement.

"Certainly, you shall have means to work yourself on, and a day's subsistence for a day's labor."

The wanderer had never heard of people of his class being detained to labor.

"Indeed! the law authorizes no relief but in exchange for labor. We cannot afford journeys gratis to our own people; of course, therefore, not to strangers. In yonder house you may subsist to-day, if you choose to earn your meals; and at this time to-morrow, you can proceed."

"Somebody has been putting it into your head, sir, that I am an impostor."

"No such thing, I assure you. I never heard a word about you, and have nothing to do with whether you are an impostor or not. If you want food, you will work for it. If not, I suppose you will let it alone."

"He will take the chance of private charity," said colonel Lee, who had come to look on.

"If our neighbors choose to give him charity, it is their own doing entirely, colonel. They all know that he may be relieved out of the rates, if they do not wish to assist him. There needs be no mendicity in the parish under this system."

"Why, indeed, we are not likely to be much troubled with beggars, if our neighbors learn to send them to be relieved according to law. Beggars are not usually the class likely to covet a day's subsistence in return for a day's labor; and if such an honest sort of one should appear now and then, he will be thankful for the food and shelter. This man, I fancy, will turn his back upon us as soon as he can."

"O, are you there, Monk? You are the man that will help me to what I want," said Mr. Barry; "your wife is a good washerwoman, is not she?"

"She took in washing before I married her."

"Very well. There is help wanted in washing in the workhouse, now and then, and I told Millar to offer the hire to your wife in the first place."

"Help wanted in washing in the workhouse!" exclaimed the colonel: "of all the women that go into the workhouse, are there none that can wash?"

"Many an one, I dare say; but the women who go into the workhouse usually get out again before washing-day comes round."

"What! is it worse to them than to the men?"

"Much the same, I fancy. We change nearly the whole set two or three times a week; and some stay only a few hours. The

only stationary ones we have had since I came into office, are two men; one a bad character, and the other a poor workman, both of whom would fain get employment if they could; and three women, only one of whom is able at present to wash: so that somebody must be hired to assist her. What say you, Monk?"

Monk bespoke the employment for his wife against the time when she should be able to undertake it. Meanwhile, he requested to be allowed eighteen-pence a week for his second child, for the same reason that he was allowed that sum on the birth of the first—that children are a great expense to a poor man.

As he must have anticipated, his demand met with no more favor than similar ones from other people, who wanted it more. But as he had not anticipated, some of his neighbors came forward to protest against his claim; to wonder why he should have more than others, and to tell of the fine draught of fish he had brought home, and of the indulgences he continued to obtain; all which Mr. Barry, for the twentieth time, explained did not concern him, or any body but Monk and his family. If the applicant wanted relief, he knew how he might get it; if not, he might let it alone. Monk was not at all pleased at some remarks that he overheard about the rate-payers being obliged to Mr. Barry for putting a stop to the encroachments of people who ought to be

above asking for parish relief. He was afraid that the spirit of combination against the overseer was beginning to give way, and that he should have to resign his hope of his rent being paid for him, on his burdens being increased. Time was getting on; the crowd of applicants in his rear was dwindling away, and there was no appearance of the overseer's paper and ink not sufficing for the required number of orders for the workhouse.

Every body drew back, to make way for the next group that appeared. The news was by this time spread through the neighborhood that the boat, which had been seen floating bottom upwards, was found to be Dyer the fisherman's, and that no doubt remained that Dyer and his eldest son had gone down in the storm. The poor man had left a wife, and five children too young to provide for themselves. A neighbor now brought these children to Mr. Barry, and told him their story, leaving their case to the merciful consideration of the overseer. Every body knew that the Dyers were miserably poor; their boat being almost their only property. The widow had actually, at this moment, not enough money in her possession to provide her children with food for this one day.

"This is a clear case," said Mr. Barry; "the poor woman and her family must be taken the best care of. The children shall be

received at Weston, and she shall go with them. There she can be as quiet as she likes, and be provided with comforts, till we can see what else can be done for her."

The by-standers were rather surprised that Weston, rather than Hurst, was talked of for Mrs. Dyer.

"It is true," he replied, "Mrs. Dyer is neither old nor sickly; but such an affliction as hers renders her the proper object of consideration and indulgence. The day when she becomes able to work will be the time for us to furnish her with employment. At present, subsistence and quiet are what she wants; and she shall have them."

"Could not you afford an allowance in her case, sir? I don't know what the neighbors will think of her being obliged to leave home, even though she may be more comfortable elsewhere."

"I have a right to order an allowance in any case whatever. If the neighbors are averse to her leaving home, they may enable her, if they please, to remain there. I do not expect this of them, remember; though the time was when private charity visited the fatherless and the widow in their affliction, and relieved them from worldly cares, till the mind had become once more fit for exertion. The time will when it was borne in mind, that as all classes of working men are not suffer-

ing alike at the same time, it is their duty to yield mutual help amidst the fluctuations of fortune. The time was, when the neighbors would have taken these poor children home, and waited by turns upon the mother with help and consolation; but that time was before parish interference had stepped in to close the hearts and hold back the hands of neighbors from each other. That time may come again —and I trust it will—but it is too soon yet to look for it; and I do not expect that Mrs. Dyer will find help anywhere but from the parish. And the parish shall do its best for her. It would be doing its worst to step between her and private charity, (as it has been doing in other cases for this many a year,) till there is scarcely any charity left among us, except that of two or three of the rich. The parish shall not be aiding in this bad work while I have the management of its funds. It shall do its best and kindest for Mrs. Dyer, leaving private charity open to do something better and kinder, if it can and will."

"Then what am I to tell Mrs. Dyer, sir?"

"That she shall be welcome, with her children, to Weston, where there will be nobody to disturb her, but such visitors as she may wish to see; that she shall have work found for her when she is able to work; and that the children shall be maintained and educated till she can maintain them herself."

The neighbor withdrew with the children; the two eldest of whom looked grave and wondering, while the younger ones had been at play under the table, or staring about them, in touching unconsciousness of their misfortune.

They were not destined to see the inside of the Weston house this day. On taking Mr. Barry's message into consideration, several neighbors were found to agree, that though they had little to say against the overseer's reasons, it seemed a pity that poor Mrs. Dyer should go from home in a hurry, when it might somehow turn up that she might do without. They could not have pretended to take upon themselves the expenses of a funeral; but as there was unhappily no funeral, they thought they might manage to keep her where she was till she could look about her a little. At any rate, they would not mention moving to her this day. So the widow was advised not to trouble her head about any little matters for to-day, at least. The hovel in which she lived soon looked tidier than its wont, and there was no unseasonable mirth of children within it; the little ones being taken home by the neighbors. Food appeared before it was asked for; and ere the widow lay down to weep through the long hours of the night, some kind hand had kindled the light which is so precious to the watcher, and a

friendly voice had whispered promises for the morrow.

Even Monk caught the contagion of sympathy; perhaps the more readily from having been obliged to give up all hope of parish assistance for himself. He began to meditate whether (especially as his wife would for some time be much taken up with a young baby) the office of washerwoman in the workhouse might not be resigned in favor of Mrs. Dyer. There was a difference between giving, and giving up. He could not give; for it was impossible for him to do without his beer and his pipe, or any thing else that he had; and it would not do to pinch his wife very closely at present; but if he could continue to get his draught and whiff without his wife going out to wash, as he had always done yet, he might, perhaps, achieve the generous thing, and surrender the advantage to poor Dyer's widow. He considered it an important and very magnanimous surrender, and was not sure that he should find himself equal to it at last; for the toil was to be his wife's, and the money his, without giving up any thing for it, since Harriet was now growing very handy, and could set his dinner before him as comfortably as his wife herself.

Mr. Barry had his own thoughts upon the case all this day. He was, indeed, not much disposed to think of any thing else, or to talk as usual.

"Papa is pleased that the empty house may be shut up again," observed Emily; "and that the people have not outwitted him. I think he had some fears at breakfast-time that half the hamlet would have declared itself in a state of pauperism before night; and now the workhouse is not half full, and will probably be nearly empty by this time to-morrow: for those who went in by agreement, must be angry enough at the conspirators who fell off and left them in the lurch. I do not wonder that papa looks pleased."

"As for that, my dear, those who really mean to do good will take pretty good care not to be outwitted. It shall go hard with me before I let our people do that. I am glad, of course, to have been spared the evil of proceeding to extremities in my experiment, and filling two houses with paupers, even for twenty-four hours. I would have kept them for twenty-four weeks or months, if they had chosen to persist; so convinced am I of the goodness of the principle on which we are now acting: but a more speedy operation is, of course, pleasanter in every way."

"The matter of the immediate expense is a very important one."

"It is. There is now every hope—there can be no doubt—that many hundred pounds will be saved from the profitless maintenance of paupers, to be laid out in rewarding labor

that is, in enabling the farmer and shopkeeper to lay out their own money in their own way, for the benefit of themselves and society; in enabling the laborer to support his household with a spirit unhardened and ungrieved; in enabling the pauper to make the comparison between freedom with toil on the one hand, and restraint with more irksome toil on the other. The rate has fallen one-third already, and is still falling; and Rickman and Dove are paying their men fourteen shillings a week, instead of nine, as at this time last year."

"Then Groves and Moss will stay, I hope, and no more worthy people be driven away by the rates, leaving us less able than ever to bear the burden."

"I have more hope than hitherto of their staying. It was not merely the yearly sum to be paid in rates which alarmed them; but the hardened spirit of the people, which gave promise of worse things perpetually. This day, they may have seen that spirit softened. This, girls, is the crowning event of the day. Charity—by which I do not mean money-giving—has come among us again; and now I can fancy that I discern an end of pauperism, with all its guilt and all its miseries."

"What are we to do, papa? Cannot we help to familiarize this charity?"

"Eminently; and the more from its being pretty well understood that you have not

money to give away. Watch over this poor woman, in companionship with her other neighbors, and help her to supply her own wants. She will soon wish for employment, and we must have it ready for her."

"What shall it be?"

"We must see what she is fit for. If she can work, I have no fear of her being compelled to be idle. Looking for work is now a very different thing from what it was a year, or even four months, ago. Our able-bodied men may now leave it to children to get limpets and cut rushes, and pick up stones to mend the roads. Our men are wanted for higher work than this; and the busier they are, the more there will be for the women to do. If you will find out what Mrs. Dyer is fit for, I may safely promise, I believe, (that which I should have thought a rash engagement some months ago,) that she shall have a bidding for her labor as soon as she wishes for one. Meantime, she is undoubtedly less forlorn than any poor widow who has met her affliction within our borders of late years."

"I wonder how her husband thought of her lot as he went down?"

"Bitterly, most bitterly, if he was a man. But now, if a similar fate should overtake another husband and father of this place, he may be spared some of the misery of such dying thoughts as this poor man's most proba-

bly were. He may think of his family as likely to be allowed their chance of thriving amidst the common influences of society, instead of being exposed to the blight of a corrupted legal charity."

CHAPTER VI.

HOLYDAY SCHOOLING.

The three weeks during which Harriet held the office of manager at home did more to make a woman of her than all the toils, troubles, and pleasures of preceding years. But she must be once more a child, for one day at least; the day when she and Ben were to do as they pleased, before returning to school.

It pleased them to do a very important thing; a thing for which Ben had been preparing, at leisure times, during the whole three weeks, while Harriet was hugging the baby or finishing Fred's nightcap, as the infant slept. It pleased Harriet and Ben, not yet to put up a cupboard within doors or a bench without, or to make efforts after a pig, but to attempt something which might help in the acquisition of all these good things in time. It pleased them to try to shrimp; and Ben had secretly taken a lesson from a neigh-

bor, and made a shrimping-net, and openly borrowed a basket for the occasion. Into this basket went a sufficiency of bread, sweetened with the extraordinary luxury of treacle. Water they were, of course, left to find for themselves. The net had been hidden, with due discretion, some way from home, and Ben took care that he was out of sight of the gable window of the cottage before he waved it over his head, and cried "Hurra!" The shore under Crow's Cliff was the point where they had determined to begin. At any place nearer, there might be bathers; and the young folks chose to have their ground all to themselves. They ran the whole way, as if they had not had the entire day before them; and their hearts were just beginning to leap up at the sight of the rippling blue tide in which they were presently to be paddling, when they heard a sound which they did not like at all. It was a shot, striking short against point after point of the cliffs. Ben looked up, out, around, and could see nothing.

"There they are," said Harriet, "a good way off—a tall gentleman and a short; unless it is a boy. Why, look there behind those rocks. The rocks are so brown with the weed, that one can scarcely see a dark coat behind them when the gentlemen stoop to point their guns. And there is the dog,

brown too, frisking after the birds. But I doubt whether the gentlemen have shot any."

"It is always the way," grumbled Ben; "there is always somebody in the way. I shall put on my shoes again. I won't shrimp when any body is in sight."

"Well, you see the water will be more fit by and by; and I dare say the gentlemen will go away."

"That they won't. This is the great place for the birds to build, and that gun will be popping off all day. I wish I could chuck it into the sea."

"I think we had better go further," Harriet suggested, "or shrimp away without minding them. Let us walk just behind them, and see what they are doing."

Ben somewhat sulkily consented; and, carrying his shoes in one hand and his net in the other, while Harriet took up the basket, he was making a circuitous route behind the sportsmen, when a shot took effect, a bird fluttered and fell, and the dog seemed unaware of the circumstance.

"Run in and fetch it for the gentleman," said Harriet; "I think it is the first he has hit, and it is a pity he should lose it."

Ben dashed in knee-deep for the bird, and seemed to commit his ill-humor to the waves; so graciously did he run up to the sportsman with the prey. He found that the little gen-

tleman was a boy about his own age, who loaded the pieces for his father, (or whoever else his companion might be,) but did not shoot. Ben found it rather interesting to watch the next attempt, and afterwards to run races with the dog for the falling birds. The shrimping seemed to have gone out of his mind for the present.

"Have you no shoes?" asked the gentleman, seeing that it made no difference in the boy's pace whether he ran over sand or shingle. Ben pointed out that he had shoes.

"You live in yonder hamlet, I suppose. Whom do you belong to?"

"Her. She is my sister."

"Nobody else? Then I suppose you are on the parish."

"In a manner; but it is not for long. We shall do for ourselves soon."

"Indeed! and what do you mean to be?"

"A fisherman. I've been out to sea many times. They'd take me out as a boy now, if my master would spare me."

"There, George, when will you be able to say as much?"

"So you do not like the being on the parish, boy?" said he. "Did you ever see the inside of the workhouse?"

Yes, Ben had seen it; for there were no neighbors disposed to take him home when his father was lost. He had seen enough of

the workhouse, during those few sad days, to wish very earnestly never to see it again.

While the gentleman went on questioning Ben about his circumstances, opinions, and feelings, employing him meanwhile in running hither and thither, in turns with the dog, Harriet wandered on along the shore, looking for a shrimping place as good as the one she had left behind. A long way off, she found one, which looked most tempting: a fine level of sand, affording a large extent of shallow water; a gap between the piled masses of the cliff, which showed the sky through, and invited her, by its being within reach, to make it the resting-place of her basket; the perfect quiet of the place, from which the hamlet could be seen only indistinctly in the distance, and there being a drip of fresh water down one cliff, at which they might drink when dinner-time came; all these things put together made Harriet glad that she had been sent on, if Ben would but come. Ben came, when she had bared her feet and tucked up her petticoats, and tried the coolness of the water with as many toes as she ventured to use for the experiment without the sympathy of Ben's. Ben wanted a higher sympathy from her. He brought a sixpence in his hand—the first piece of silver money either had ever possessed: for though Harriet had seven-pence, it had been told in copper into

Miss Emily's lap. After a speculation as to what could induce the gentleman to give Ben so much, and a long consultation about where to put it that it might be safe, with trials of how it looked on different ledges and in different clefts of the rock, it was tied up, with as many knots as the coin contained pence, in the corner of Harriet's apron, and the work of the day was entered upon.

"Give me the net; it is my turn first, because I made the net," said Ben.

"Your turn first! when I am two years older!" cried Harriet, beginning to push the net before her, after the manner of shrimpers. Ben hastened towards her, making a prodigious splash, and tried to pull it from her, disregarding all her warnings that he was driving the shrimps away. She turned her back; he dodged her. In fear of having it pulled from her before she had caught any thing, she uplifted it, and found no shrimps, nor any thing but a bit of green weed.

"Now, you know nothing about the way," Ben began.

"We got more rushes in half an hour than we shall get shrimps to-day, after all," thought Harriet; but the remembrance of the friendship of the day of rush-gathering rose in time to prevent her prophecy coming true.

"W[illegible] I believe I do know nothing about

the way," said she; "you had better take the net first, and show me."

"No; not take the net, but only show you how, without making a splash and a fuss," said Ben, very graciously; and nothing could now exceed the desire of each not to have the net. The shrimps, if they happened to hear, must have mourned over this politeness; for it was a fatal omen to them. Up they came by handfuls, wriggling and hopping; and a fine display they made when turned into a hole scooped in the sand for their reception. For nearly two hours might the clear voices of the boy and girl have been heard by any wanderer in this solitude, congratulating one another on the goodness of the net and the plenitude of the supply, and exclaiming at something or another that was happening every minute.

"Look, what a monster!" "There, you let that great fellow get away!" "Will this round thing eat like a shrimp when it is boiled?" "But, Ben, if we get eighteen-pence one week, how do we know that we shall earn as much the next? I think we had better get it two or three weeks forward before we say a word about it to the overseer or any body."

Ben thought he could not wait; but, meantime, wanted to know whether the creature he held by the tail was small enough to be thrown into the water again.

"I think now we might turn them all out, and sort them, and put the tiny ones into the sea, and the others into the basket. Here, do you empty the net this time, and I will reach down the basket."

"The basket! Where? Why, you silly thing," said Ben, when he saw the predicament of the basket, "what made you stick it there, where the salt water will spoil all our bread and treacle?"

His dismayed sister could only protest that there was no water in the arch when she wedged the basket in it. There was enough now, however, pouring through in gushes with every wave. Before she could get through the water, which had risen unperceived between her and the arch, the basket tottered, and then toppled into the waves; on whose bosom it was floating away, dispersing its contents in all directions, when Harriet caught it. The dinner was fished up, but found to be utterly spoiled. Those must be hungry indeed who could eat bread and treacle soaked in sea-water. Harriet was very, very sorry, and supposed they must either change Ben's sixpence somewhere for food, or get home earlier than they had meant, to hasten their supper. A sudden rush and spread of green water drove them back to hold their consultation nearer the cliff. This flow of the tide seemed to decide the choice

of evils between fasting and changing the sixpence.

"There, now," said Ben, "we can't get back, I believe, if we would. It will be too late to want to buy our dinners when the tide goes down; so the sixpence is safe, and that is a good thing."

It was no more practicable to get forward than back. But they had fished quite as many shrimps as they expected, and there was a cave behind them which looked very pleasant; just the kind of retreat where people who lead Harriet's sort of life like to sit and do nothing, now and then. This cave was soon the only place left for them to amuse themselves in; the water flowing up to the very ledge at the entrance. On this ledge they sat down; Harriet to wring her gown-tail, and Ben to point out how very green this wave was upon the white sand, and the next greener, and another greenest of all, and to tell how far down he could distinguish the leech-line of his master's nets when out on such a clear sea as this.

"And what a sound every time now!" said Harriet; "it makes a noise as if it was quite in the cavern. And so it is, Ben; it has come up all that since we sat down."

"The faster it comes in, the sooner we shall get out," said Ben.

"Ah! I am afraid you will be sadly hungry

before we get back. But I hope it is just going to turn now."

On the very point of turning, Ben thought: indeed it must be higher already than usual, to judge by the old appearance of such watermarks as he could find. There was no sign of the tide turning, however, for one five minutes after another. The gleams danced more multitudinously on the roof of the cavern; the shock of each wave resounded more hoarsely; and Harriet was detected by her brother sending a hasty glance round the place, as if questioning whether there was not a hole to creep out of. Ben stood up, with his arms by his sides, looking at her.

"I say, Harriet, suppose the tide goes on coming up in this way, so as to fill up this whole place!"

"Why, then, I suppose we must be drowned."

"I 'll never be drowned, if I can get away," cried Ben, running vehemently round the narrow space, and even pushing against its walls, which had stood since the creation.

"Why, Ben; stop! Stop, Ben! What do you do that for? I can't bear to see you do that; you know very well you can't get out."

Ben sprang upon her, and hung round her neck, as if he meant to strangle her; probably to prevent her repeating these words. She disengaged herself as soon as she could,

and, crying, sat down at the farthest end of the place.

Whatever might be Ben's mood, at any time, nothing exerted so much influence over it as Harriet's tears. He now grew very quiet, and sat down by her. Harriet never wept long.

"What a—what an odd thing it would be," she said, "if we were to die by drowning, when father was drowned!"

Ben would now tell her what he had never meant to tell her—that he had fallen overboard in one of his trips with his master. Harriet's feeling on hearing this was not exactly what it would have been in Monk's kitchen. As she fixed her eyes upon the place where a new point of the cliff had just disappeared, she wanted most of all to know what drowning was like.

Ben could not tell her much about it, as he had tumbled in, and been pulled out before he well knew what he was about. It put him in a great fright, however; much greater than during the night when Harriet thought he would never come back again. At the remembrance of that night, Harriet smiled and said,

"Why, it was your being so far away, and I safe at home, that made me care so much that night. We are together now; and there is nobody else belonging to us," she continu-

ed, brightening; "so what may happen does not much signify."

"No; they are thinking little enough of us; gabbling at school, some of them; and master and mistress busy, and not thinking about us till night."

"If any body is thinking about us 't is Fred; and he has not sense enough to know where we are and what might befall us."

"What will they all say when they hear it?" asked Ben. "You don't think every body will be talking about us, as they did about the Dyers, do you? And yet I heard a good deal about Joe Dyer, too; and he was less than a year older than me."

Harriet thought that might be owing to his having gone down with his father, whose life was a very important one. She was very glad that nobody knew of the silly quarrel between Ben and herself this very morning, about the net. It was strange to think they could have quarrelled about such a trifle, so short a time before they should be waiting as they were now. Ben was sure it was his fault that they had quarrelled so often as they had done; but he did not think, if he could get out now, that he should be so cross any more. He had often been angry with himself, but somehow, he never could say so at the right time; and Harriet seemed to have forgotten it all afterwards, so that it would

have done no good to put her in mind. Harriet always knew this, all the time; but they had better not talk now of getting out any more. See how the water was coming up to their very toes; and there was such a small opening left at the mouth of the cavern, that they could not see one of the ships that she had watched when she first sat down. They were quite alone now, except—

Ben would not give up. He made haste to show how a point of rock, which he did not remember to have seen till now, seemed to be popping up and down in the moving water. He thought it was becoming more and more largely visible. Harriet thought not. They agreed neither of them to speak till the matter was decided. In five minutes the point was completely covered.

"We might have come upon the parish by and by, and had every body against us," said Harriet; "and I don't mind it, as if it was you only. I think we ought to be saying our prayers, Ben."

"I don't know how—What do you think we should say?"

"I suppose we should say what we think—that we are ready to go, and not afraid of any thing, and that we have been very happy so far. I should say for myself that you have been a very good brother to me. I know I never cared much for any thing but because

of you; and I never should have been much afraid of any thing that might happen while I had you for a brother, Ben."

Ben did not think he had been so happy as Harriet; but that was his own fault, and he did not mean to be less thankful on that account. He had been more put out with people; and he still thought they had used him hardly sometimes. Very hardly, from not understanding him, his sister agreed.

"There! there goes the basket?"

Harriet caught it, and proposed putting it on a high projection, like a shelf, which she thought she could reach by climbing. She was afraid it was impossible for either of them to get upon it, or to find room to remain there in any posture; but the basket might stand there; and it was a pity somebody should not have it, and the net too. Ben thought the same of his sixpence; and when the tight, wet knots of Harriet's apron were at length loosened, the coin was laid conspicuously on the top of the shrimps, and the whole lodged on the shelf.

Harriet's cotton shawl fell from her shoulders into the water, while she was mounted, and the next ebb carried it out of reach. It seemed to herself very perverse; but she could scarcely help crying at seeing this one article of her property taken possession of by the waves, when there was every probability that

they would presently swallow up herself and all she had.

No; not quite all. She wondered who would have the money of theirs that was in Miss Barry's hands. Miss Barry would soon know what had become of them, if she liked to ask. The sporting gentleman could tell nearly enough where they went to give an idea what must have happened. To think, Ben said, how near those gentleman might be, and that from the mouth of this very cave the roofs of the houses in the hamlet might be seen, and that yet no one was stirring to save them!

A quieter power was now at work to save them (as they soon perceived) than the less mighty force which man puts in motion in his contests with nature. The tide had at length turned, and inch after inch of slimy footing appeared. The water-line fell, till a white soil was once more visible, and the world opened again upon those who had well nigh left it. They had little to say during the reaction, under which they had now to suffer. At first they sat still; but when the water had nearly left the cave, their impatience to get out became excessive. When they emerged, at length, with flushed cheeks and chattering teeth, they felt, though full of thankfulness, as if it must have been very silly to be so frightened; and they avoided looking at each other.

When they had made a further escape from the shadow of the cliff to the sunshine on the down, (being anxious to get a good way from the margin of the sea just at present,) Ben turned round to propose that they should say nothing to any body of what had happened. "Say nothing! and why?" Because the mistress would perhaps blame them, and most likely never let them go out shrimping again. This last was not to be thought of, as shrimping was looked upon as the grand means, the strong ground of hope, of freeing themselves from the parish. Silence was therefore agreed upon.

Silence was kept. No explanation was given in answer to Mrs. Monk's surprise at seeing them home before night.

"Well, I suppose you found you had had enough of being together, and so came home, very wisely. You are just come when I wanted you, Harriet. Here, take the baby while I set things straight a little for my husband. I have not been able to get a single thing done to-day, Fred was so wakeful and troublesome. I suppose it is because he has been used to have you put him to sleep and manage him. What have you got in your basket, Ben—shrimps! a quantity of shrimps! My dears, did you get all these yourselves? I do believe there will be four or five pints of them when they are boiled; and, one with another, I should not wonder if they bring you three-pence a pint.

You shall finish the day to your liking. I will boil them for you presently, and then you may carry them up to sell, in time for people's tea. Fill the saucepan, Ben, and fetch me down the salt, and then run and ask Mrs. Hart to lend you her pint measure. I dare say she will."

"May I get Ben his supper first?" asked Harriet.

"It is full early for his supper, and I doubt whether there is any bread: but he can step to the baker's from Mrs. Hart's."

Ben found a small crust, which he broke between himself and his sister, and ran off just in time to avoid witnessing the trouble Harriet was about to fall into about the loss of her shawl. It was missed, and she was called to account for it.

"It fell off into the water, and it floated away. Ben tried all he could to get it."

"Then he may try all he can to get you another; for I cannot afford to give you things to be lost in that foolish way. You should have left it on the sands, with your shoes and stockings. It is always the way when you give children pleasure, that some mischief comes of it. It seems as if they could not make merry without losing or spoiling something."

"The shrimps might go to pay for it, only they are half Ben's," said Harriet.

"Well; the fault was half Ben's, I dare say. You were at some silly play in the water, I have no doubt."

Harriet merely said "no," and concluded within herself that the gains of the holyday must go to repair the losses of the holyday. She was, however, spared this mortification.

In a little while, Mrs. Monk saw from the window that the neighbors were hastening towards a particular spot on the beach, where something was apparently to be seen. She followed to learn what was the matter, desiring Harriet to stay within with the children. She soon returned with Harriet's shawl, which she threw at her, saying that getting it back again was better luck than she deserved, and that it was to be hoped she would be duly ashamed of the trouble and concern she had occasioned to the gentlemen who brought it. They had seen the children on the shore in the morning, they said; and not having observed them return before the spring tide overflowed the whole beach, in the direction they had taken, and having seen this shawl washed up, the sportsmen had feared that the children might be lost, and had hastened back to the hamlet to ascertain whether the shawl was known there, and to give the alarm. They had been very good-humored, Mrs. Monk

said, on finding that their trouble had been in vain; but she had felt herself bound to make as humble an apology as she could for Harriet's carelessness. Harriet duly thanked her proxy, and proposed running after the gentleman to return the sixpence; the story of which she had not, till now, been allowed time to tell. She was bidden to keep it, and not suppose that such as she was to think of offering sixpence to gentlefolks.

Mrs. Monk was certainly very cross to-day. She had often been cross of late. She mentioned it herself sometimes, and said she was wearing out, or growing old, or something. Every one who heard her say this, rallied her about talking of age, when her husband, who was many years older, seemed as hearty a man as ever. As for wearing out, unless there was some illness or grief that no one knew of, such a thing was difficult to account for; since her husband had certainly got up in the world of late, being free of the parish, and no worse off at home than before, but rather better, from his venturing to get many little comforts about him that he did not think of having, so long as the overseer's eyes were always upon him. Harriet was growing up, too, to be a more handy help than many women were blessed with. It was really a pity that Mrs. Monk should think of such a thing as wearing out.

Even Harriet ventured to hint this, when the shrimps had been sold for fifteen-pence, and the orphans thus became authorized to speak, as those who have a power, as well as a will, of their own.

CHAPTER VII.

EASE WITH DIGNITY.

However much Mrs. Monk's neighbors might at first think it a pity that she should fancy any thing about being worn out, the time came when they began to entertain the same fancy. Whatever the cause might be, she certainly declined; and a weary decline it was. It was just five years from the time when she had taken the two orphans under her protection, that they performed the last offices of children to her; going from closing her eyes to comforting the husband who survived her.

She had been tended carefully, and provided with far more comforts than some few years before she would have ventured to wish for; circumstances which she owed to her own merits. It was her training which had made Harriet the nurse and housekeeper which she was now found to be. It was her example

which had accustomed Ben to the industry which now largely assisted to supply the wants of the family; and it was her conduct as a wife which secured from Monk more consideration and manifestation of affection than she had ever enjoyed since the early days of their marriage.

Monk did, indeed, appear to want comfort when all was over, the body laid in the ground, and the funeral guests departed. What was he to do, in this time of his old age, he asked, with two young children, who, he always used to think, would be left under the care of a good mother whenever he should be past toiling and managing for them?

This was a question which Harriet and Ben had expected, and to which they had prepared an answer, after some grave consultations in the sick chamber of their friend, and again over her coffin. Their answer was: Why should not they all go on living together, as they had done? If Monk would continue his occupation just when it pleased him to go out to fish, and let Ben have the free use of his boat and other apparatus, there seemed little doubt that the rent could be raised, and the wants of the family provided for. Harriet would do what she could to prevent the children feeling the loss of a mother; and as Monk grew older and less able to exert himself, Fred would be growing up into a fitness

to be either a sailor-boy—his favorite fancy—or something else that was useful; and none of them would ever think of poor little Harry being a trouble.

Monk was quite ready to own that no other plan could yield equal promise of comfort to him; but thought it hard that the parish should have no help to offer to persons in this kind of distress. In old times, and even now, in parishes not fifty miles off, there would be an allowance given to each of his children, and help to himself, and the entire charge of Harriet and Ben willingly resumed.

"But we do not want it, or wish for it," said Ben. "After having been off the parish entirely now for more than three years, it would be a sin and a shame to go back to it."

"And the children shall not have to think about the parish, if we can help it," added Harriet. "As long as there is the Hurst school for them to go to, they need not look to the Weston one for instruction; and as for their ever having to labor a stroke, or taste a meal in the workhouse here, I trust Providence has a better lot in store for them."

Monk trusted so too; but he was getting an old man, and the one that he looked to for every thing was gone, and there was no venturing to say who could tell how soon he might pass away. He was reminded that the story of Harriet and Ben might be taken as a hint as

to what was to become of his own boys. Harriet and Ben had been left more unprotected than these children. They had been reared to a state of early independence, and were ready to testify their thankfulness by discharging offices of protection to other two, who might possibly have it in their power to repay to society, in their turn, the benefits they should have received. This was much better than owing any thing to the parish; and there seemed every reason to think that the parties concerned lost nothing by such kindly arrangements.

"No; I don't say they do," replied Monk; "for I am sure it would have been a very different thing to her that is gone to have me come home with her parish allowance, once a week, and nothing more than that grudged money to comfort her with—it would have been very different from her having you always at her beck and call, and Ben bringing in his half-crown sometimes, and no talk of the parish, from first to last of her illness. I don't deny the good of this; but it may not often happen that such as you and Ben are at hand at such times."

"Not where the parish is always at hand to be applied to first, I dare say," said Harriet: "but I do not see why there should not be plenty such as Ben and me, if orphans were timely taught and tended in some place out

of the workhouse. In the workhouse, they do not know whom to look up to, to thank and repay for the care of them; and so, too often, grow up thankless. But people must be bad indeed, be they orphans or any thing else, to take their rearing, and training, or any kind of help, and not wish to give the same in their turns to some that want it as they once did. You will let us try to take care of Fred and Harry; and you will try yourself to be comfortable with us, will not you? If we find we cannot get on, it is only to separate then instead of now: but, indeed, I have much hope, and so has Ben, that we shall get on."

"Well, my dear, you can but try, if you wish it; and if you do not find me so comfortable as I have been, you will not fancy I want to be going anywhere else. I shall never be comfortable any more."

"We do not expect, we never thought of making up to you for her that is gone. O no! it is little we can do; but what trouble we can save you we will."

"Harriet has something particular to say about that," observed Ben: "it is better to get every thing agreed upon completely beforehand, that there may be no difficulty afterwards."

What Harriet had to stipulate was, that the management of the money affairs of the family

should be left to those who were to direct its other affairs. If Monk would just fix upon the weekly sum which he thought would answer his expenses for his own little comforts, it would trouble him least to have that sum regularly, and not be further burdened about any other expenditure; and for her own part, Harriet thought she and Ben could not justly undertake to do their part on any other plan. Monk, who hated trouble at all times, and now was particularly indisposed to exertion, had no objection to make; and Harriet was immediately invested with the dignity of domestic manager, and Ben with the responsibility of providing the greater part of the resources.

The greater part; for his sister determined that while she could earn money, the whole responsibility should not rest on Ben. Monk scarcely ever went out fishing after this time, and he took charge of the two pigs at the rear of the cottage; finding it an amusement to feed and tend them in the morning, and throw odds and ends to them at other times of the day, when there was nothing to be seen on the beach. He did not object to being left in charge of the little one when Fred was at school; and thus Harriet was set at liberty for hours together to go out shrimping, or to wait on the bathing parties who now frequented the place in summer. For this last service

she was so well recompensed as to enable her to discharge the funeral expenses without begging for delay in the payment of her rent, or being obliged to sell one of the pigs; which would have been a discouraging beginning of her housekeeping.

"I am glad you came home before dark, Ben," said his sister, one fine midsummer evening, "and that you let my master—(for so the young folks continued to call Monk)—I am glad you let my master go to bed first; for I want to consult with you. But, are you very tired?"

"A good deal; but I am not for bed just yet."

"Well: about the rent. Quarter-day is close at hand; but I need not tell you that, for we have both been counting the days since the month began, and shall till the quarter is past. Is my master sound asleep, do you think?"

Ben went to make sure, and shut the door securely while he pronounced him snoring. Harriet, meanwhile, lighted a candle, brought down a slate and pencil from a high shelf, and a little leathern bag which Miss Barry had given her to keep money in. Ben hung up a blind before the window, that no gleam of silver might find its way out, and set Monk's chair for his sister, and a stool for himself, preparatory to the important business of set-

tling accounts. Their conversation was conducted in a whisper.

"Now, Ben, do you take the pencil and reckon. How much do you expect to get for your fish to-morrow?"

"Why, I have had but poor luck to-day, when I expected something better; but I may get half-a-crown, leaving the smallest of the fish for our own dinners."

"I shall want a shilling of that for bread and salt; and our stock of potatoes is nearly out: but we may reckon on sparing fifteen-pence of it for the rent. Here I put nine-pence to it from my shrimping to-day."

"That is two shillings; and it is down on the slate."

"Here is your great five shilling piece; that 's seven. And three sixpences; eight and sixpence. Now, have we the other six and six-pence? Yes! here are seven shillings and three-pence halfpenny. Only think of our having nine-pence halfpenny over! if you sell your fish as you say."

"I think I shall. What will you do with the money left over?"

"There are plenty of ways to spend it. The window wants a pane. I saw Miss Emily glance at it, being stuffed, the last time she was here."

"And Harry's pinafore is all one great hole."

"He tore it from top to bottom, just when I had mended it: but though it looks such a big hole, it is not so bad to mend as some. I'll do it to-night. But he will soon want another or two. But there is a thing we shall have to pay, they say, that we must keep a little money for; though I dare not mention it to my master."

"O, then, I know you mean the rate. To me there is a pleasure in paying that, instead of taking it."

"Ah! instead of taking it: and having ever taken it, it is our part to pay it. I wonder how much it will be."

"It can't be much upon us; so many more being payers now, and less wanted, by half, than there was when there were fewer to pay. If I thought it would not be more than ninepence,—"

"That is what I was going to say. You might take it when you take the rent, to show your readiness."

"But how will you manage about the window, and about Harry's pinafores?"

"I will get enough for that before many days are over, if the lame lady goes on bathing. Besides, we have near three shillings in the bank. We would not take it out if we could help it; but there it is, in case we really want it. But I should like to pay the rate with a grace."

"Then I 'll be off early with my fish, and get all paid and settled to-morrow, shall I?"

"Yes, do: and remember to bring the receipts. Look here! Here is where I keep my receipts. Double bags like these are convenient things; money in one side, and receipts in the other."

"What receipts can you have? I never thought of such a thing."

"Nor should I, but for something Miss Emily said to me once about buying too little of a thing at a time. I got half a pound of tea for my master, the last time I wanted soap for my washing, and the grocer gave me a receipt. And I chose to ask one of Dodd for the great piece of cheese, because we had been apt, before I was manager, to run scores there, and my mistress rather thought he charged us twice over sometimes."

"Well; whatever way you manage, things are full as comfortable as they were before you were manager. That I will say for you."

"Will you? can you? I am so glad; for I could not be sure myself. But we must remember that any thing that used to go wrong might not be my mistress' fault, while she had not her own way, as I have."

"'T is a pity she had not; for my master seems as comfortable now as ever he used to be: or, I should rather say, more. He does not seem to miss her as I thought he would."

"Ah! you don't see him at times when I do. When he lies under the boats, or leans over the rail by the pig-sty, then is his time for thinking of her."

"I am sure I think of her much oftener than that."

"To be sure! and so does he; and so do I. Before I go to sleep, and when I wake, and as sure as ever Harry cries, I think of her. He is a winning boy, Harry, is not he?"

"He is; but scarcely like to be so fine a fellow as Fred. If Fred is made a sailor-boy, as he wants to be, he will get credit at sea, depend upon it."

"I doubt whether his own father has such an opinion of him as we."

"He does not know him so well; though that is a strange thing to be said about father and son. Besides he is against old people admiring any thing much; and he calls himself old now."

"He is, to be sure. Sixty is a great age. I hope I shall not live to sixty, if I must leave off admiring such boys as Fred."

"If you think sixty such a great age, what do you think of eighty-three—Goody Gidney's age—what would you say if my master lives to eighty-three?"

"That he shall be welcome to live with us still, instead of going upon the parish for any

part of the many years that Goody Gidney has been there."

"If we go on living together," said Ben—

"Ah!" said Harriet, smiling, "the time must come, I know, when you will be thinking of something different; but—"

"O, but I was thinking of it for you, not me. You are the eldest."

"O, but I was thinking about it for you; because it signifies more to you. However, we had better not even think at all about it, for one another or ourselves. We do very well at present; and this is the sort of life we always used to plan together; and I am sure I like it very much."

"So do I; a thousand times better than being ordered about and managed, as we were. We will never order Fred about as I used to be ordered. I used to say so to myself at the time, I remember. But, Harriet, I can't say that this is exactly the sort of thing we used to plan—it is not living, just us two together."

"No; but much better. More useful, though less free and quiet. It is far better than we ever had reason to think of; so do not let us say a word against it, Ben."

"O no; not I. I like fishing when I am abroad, and seeing you manager when I am at home; and so I am content. And a shame it would be if I was not. So good night; I am going to bed."

"And I am going to mend Harry's pinafore. And look where I put the money-bag, that you may know where to find it to-morrow, without asking, if you should happen to come for it when I am out. Good night."

Monk came in from a lounge with a neighbor the next day, just while Ben was showing his sister the receipts he had brought for the rent, and also for the rate, which had amounted to no more than five-pence, and was scarcely likely to be so much next time. Monk looked over Ben's shoulder, (as Ben was looking over his sister's,) and was not displeased. Instead of pitying them, as they expected he would, for being called on to discharge their duties as housekeepers in the parish; instead of railing at the oppression of the overseers, Monk seemed to look with complacency upon the document, which was one of the very last he would some time ago have desired to see in his house. After putting on his spectacles twice to read it, he stuck it up between the two best brass candlesticks over the fireplace.

"Had not I better put it away with my other receipts?" inquired Harriet.

"No, no. Let it stay where it is. I like to see it. I will take care that no harm comes to it. I like to see it there. Well, Ben, what handiwork next?"

"Mending the window. I got three-pence more for my fish than I reckoned upon; and

that, with what I had left after paying the rate, helped me to a pane and some putty; and now I 'm going to try my hand at glazier's work."

Harriet drew near her brother, when he was at his task, to discover whether he had inquired of the glazier the expense of brown paint. He had; and he really thought that if the two jobs were done at one time, so as to waste no paint—the touching up the boat, and painting the bench—the bench might be afforded. The glazier had said the same thing as the carpenter, about the family having been old customers, and the willingness of all friends to deal handsomely with the young folks on their first setting out. So Ben thought Harriet might hope to see the bench up, and Miss Barry sitting on it, before the long evenings were all gone by. It was much to be desired that it should be done during the long early mornings, that the glazier's time might not have to be paid for, but the business be done by Ben himself, without interfering with his fishing. He had painted his master's name on the boat once, and knew how to use the brush.

As Harriet sat this afternoon on the step of the door, making a checked shirt for her brother, and talking to Harry, who was rearing a tower of sand on the outside, Monk wanted to pass more than once, with a neighbor or two,

to show a curious bit of coral on the chimney-piece, which might just as well been shown any day for the last ten years. It was observable that each visiter had something to say to Harriet about the rate, and the new plan of giving receipts for every payment.

At length, seeing no more neighbors at liberty, Monk found out that it was likely to be a very fine evening, and that it was a great length of time since he had seen Goody Gidney. He would take Harry in his hand, and go and look in upon her. Harry could not leave his fortification, however; and Monk went alone, looking really like something of the old man, Harriet thought, as she followed him with her eyes across the deep sand.

Goody Gidney replied to her guest's remarks on its being a long time since she had crossed his threshold, that it did not do for elderly people to put themselves in the way of seeing trouble. It was bad for the spirits to go into a house where there had been a death; and, besides, Monk was a leisure man now, and it was rather his part, considering his youth, to come and visit her.

"Why, Goody, I have not so many years upon me as you, by upwards of twenty, I know; but yet it is on account of age that I have time on my hands, as you heard. I have nearly given up fishing, because I am too old for the sea."

"Now, take my advice, and don't begin talking about being old long before you need, as people commonly do. I don't mean to give in to any such fancies till I am really old."

"And when will that be, Goody?"

"O, one hears of many people, you know, that live to a hundred, and more; and up to ninety-six is quite common: and I'm far enough from that yet."

"True, Goody, I rather wonder you let yourself be moved up to this place as an old person."

"Why; it was not for me to take offence, when so many, not even elderly, came too. Jem Collins' grandmother is not above half way between you and me. It need not be long, you see, before you can get in. You will find it very comfortable and pleasant."

Monk thanked her, but had no present intention of ever coming; which Goody thought very odd and unnatural, expatiating on the advantages of the residence; its quiet, airiness, fine views, &c. Monk assumed an air of condescension as he answered:

"All these things may signify much to you, who have never known what it is to live in a home of your own. I have no doubt it is a fine exchange from the place below; considering the state it was in for most of the seventy years you lived there; but my case is different—"

"Very different from what it was, Mr. Monk. Where is she that made your home every thing to you? Gone, and left you with two young things. Neighbor, I did not mean to make your countenance change so: but if you tempt me to speak of differences, you know—"

"She has left behind her some that make my case as different from yours as it was before; and we do not take it as the kindest thing in the world, Goody, to talk to those who help to support the workhouse of going in themselves. As long as our receipt for the rate sticks up before my eyes at home, as I left it just now, I shall take it amiss to be supposed to design coming in, Goody."

"Bless my heart! neighbor, who could have guessed that you had grown so high since I saw you last?"

"'T is not that I have grown high, Goody; nor has it all happened since you saw me last; but I do not pretend to deny that times are changed so far as that those who live and have long lived on the rate have no right to make themselves equals with those who pay to the rate."

"And a pretty piece of work you made about paying to the rate when it was first talked of! You did not hold up your head so mightily about it then."

"Because then it seemed just the thing

that would sink me quite. It is different now, for me and others. Wages are so much better—near double what the farmers used to give; and as it is a thriving place, more people have come to live, besides those staying who talked of going away; so that there is more encouragement to fish. One can pay the rate now without feeling it burdensome; and may find it unpleasant to hear any thing about coming into the workhouse."

"Very well! with all my heart. You know all my wish for you and yours used to be that you might be as well off as I was. And, as neighbor Collins was saying to me—"

"Ah! Mrs. Collins. I'll just say 'how do you do?' to her before I go down."

"Do. That is her place commonly; the seat by the gate. She likes the sea view best, and I the road where people pass; so we each please ourselves. She knits too."

"And you? Do you knit or spin? To my recollection, I never saw you do either."

"Why should I, if I don't want it for amusement? I was going to say, Collins is rather downhearted to-day, on account of some news she has heard; and you may give her some certainty about the matter, perhaps; and that will settle her mind, at least."

Monk could not do any good, he feared. He had heard something of Jem Collins' conduct towards Betsy; but he did not know that

any body expected any thing better from Jem Collins. As for the poor girl, she was done for; and he had desired Harriet to have no more to say to her, except just speaking when they met.

"About Jem himself," continued Monk, "I want to know what that fellow is doing. I shall go and ask the overseer whether he is on the parish still. I have no notion of our money going to support a vagabond like him."

"His grandmother will tell you presently whether he is in the workhouse or out of it," observed Goody.

"And if he is in, he ought to be turned out. There is no use talking about wanting work, now that people are coming from other parishes to work for Rickman and Dove."

"How some folks would have grumbled in my young days at people coming in from other parishes!" observed Goody.

"Because they came to get settlements, and ours had the name of a good parish. Now that settlements here can get them nothing better than a place in the workhouse, which nobody likes, there is no danger of their coming to encroach. As for ours having got the name of a bad parish, I say it is a better parish than ever it was for the character and comfort of the people in it. And that is the one thing to be considered."

Goody Gidney, who never appeared to

dream of her being of a different class in society from the dwellers below, agreed that she was indeed very comfortable now; and against her character nobody had ever had any thing to say. She had reason to be thankful that she belonged to this parish.

Monk did not find his old friend such suitable society for him as he used to think her; she was so utterly blind to the difference there was now between them. Instead of staying as late as the rules of the Weston house allowed, he went to inquire of Mr. Barry about Jem Collins, and one or two more idle fellows that ought not to be supported by him and his, and by other folks that had a right to speak about what should be done with the fund they helped to raise.

It was Mr. Barry's practice to receive on terms of equality all who came to say any thing to him on the administration of parish affairs. He now referred Monk to the accounts, which were deposited so as to be accessible to all the rate-payers of the hamlet, previous to their being sent up, with those of the neighboring hamlets, to the parish quarterly examination. There Monk might find (with so much minuteness were these accounts kept) an entry of every expense incurred on behalf of the particular persons he named, if they had been chargeable to the parish. He would find little to object to in the amount of

relief given. It had, of course, been all within the workhouse, and the expenses of the two houses of Weston and Hurst had been, in all, only two hundred pounds this last year. Monk was meditating a shake of the head, and an observation that this was a large sum, when he remembered that, at the time of Mr. Barry coming into office, the annual expenses had been between twelve and thirteen hundred pounds.

On this head Mr. Barry had just to say that the rates were about to fall more lightly than ever upon the housekeepers of the place. He had discovered that the fund which was annually applied to the distribution of bread and blankets from the church-door was not appropriated to any such purpose by the benevolent person who bequeathed it. It was designed for the "relief of the poor," and the trustees were at liberty to spend it any way which might seem to them to afford the most relief to the poor.

"Which is not according to the present plan, sir," said Monk.

"So I think. There used to be more jealousy, and quarrelling, and encroaching about it than the donation was worth; and now the difficulty is to find people willing to take it. Those who pay to the rate do not like to be ranked with 'the poor,' for the sake of a gift which can come no oftener than once a year.

It was the seeing loaves put up to be bid for, as it were, that made me consider whether the money might not be spent upon those who really want it."

"Relieving the poorer housekeepers at the same time, sir, by lessening the rate."

"Yes; the proceeds of this bequest will go a good way towards making up the small rates we shall want next year. There is another large charity belonging to the whole parish, whose object has died out, and whose funds are accumulating, without the trustees knowing what in the world to do with them. Colonel Lee is stirring up the other magistrates to see whether that fund may not be legally applied to the maintenance of paupers. If he gets the thing done, Hurst, Barham, and Weston may find the relief to their rates no trifling one. In that case, I should not wonder if there is even an end of rate-collecting here altogether, in the ordinary way. I am sure the parish will always be ready to answer the call in case of the sudden misfortune of a large family; such as Dyer's, for instance."

"I suppose Mrs. Dyer is still employed about the workhouse, sir. You know it was I that got her that employment, if you remember."

"I remember. Yes. She is employed in washing and cleaning, when there is any

thing to do; but that is seldom now. The two or three women who are there are those who are there for some good cause, and are therefore fixed, so far as to do the necessary business of the house. There is hope of even their leaving in a little while."

"Poor Mrs. Dyer!"

"O, she has other work, of course; or she would be there herself. The elder boys are placed out, and she finds herself able to maintain the younger ones; her friends remembering the importance to her of always having employment. She does not yet keep her pig, or show a bit of new furniture every year, like many of her neighbors; but she does not want bread, and has never brought her children to take a meal in the workhouse."

Monk hoped the parish had done its duty by the widow, as much as if she had had the daily maintenance of herself and her little ones from its funds, every day since her husband's death. And now he would go home, and get his best spectacles, and see, before he slept, how much Jem Collins had cost the parish. He would not look so close into a sober poor man's receipts—he should be ashamed to do it; but Jem was any thing but a sober poor man; and the sober of the parish ought to know what he cost them.

Emily observed to her father, when Monk was gone, that he did not appear to have the

slightest recollection of having ever taken parish relief himself.

"Never mind, my dear," replied her father; "we will not recall it. The best thing we can wish for a working man is that no idea of parish relief should enter his head; and the next best thing to never having had such an idea is to lose it."

CHAPTER VIII.

LABOR WITH DIGNITY.

HARRIET did not find her work grow less under her hands from her being at the head of the household. Though the purpose to her happiness was answered just as well by her having gained confidence in herself and dignity in the eyes of others, and being unmolested in the fulfilment of her little plans, the time had not yet come for any relaxation of exertion. She did not wish to relax till she had accomplished several things she knew to be desirable; through a pretty long series of which she saw a grand distinct object—the fitting out Fred properly as a respectable sailor-boy. She would not only do every stitch of his things herself, but Ben and she must buy them; and for this purpose pence and

sixpences must find their way to the savings bank, from this day to that of making the final purchases. The thought of this achievement roused her many an early morning from her deep sleep, and enabled her to undertake another task, and yet another, at the end of a long day. Sometimes, too, it took her abroad when the family were at rest, and gave her courage to cast her net into waters, upon which only she and the moon looked down. When the tide served for shrimping at midnight, at midnight she went forth to shrimp; taking her rest before it, or after it, or the next night, as it might happen. Mr. Barry always thought that if these young people showed a thoughtfulness and sobriety beyond their years, it was owing, not only to their early circumstances of orphanhood, but to their each being much engaged in a silent and solitary occupation. Ben had plenty of leisure to think over his past and plan his future life, while waiting for the time to draw in his nets, or while trimming his sail; and when alone, under the shadow of the cliffs, Harriet settled her mind about a thousand things that she might have had to decide hastily amidst the bustle of the family at home. She could never manage to lie awake and think, as she had heard that many good managers do. Such thinking always fell into dreaming, or into nothing, immediately: but

when she was noiselessly pacing the sands, with bare feet, or gently splashing through the water, there was nothing to interfere with her thousand thoughts of Ben, and her hundreds of Fred and Harry. Monk was not very observant of little things; but even he discovered, at last, that most new and clever little methods of management, most rectifications of abuses in the household, most novelties of indulgence to the children, came after Harriet had been out shrimping at night.

This could not have been the case if Harriet had been afraid. But her mind was too full for such an engrossing feeling as fear. If any body had questioned her, she would have asked what she should be afraid of. She liked shadow and moonlight equally by turns, had been taught no superstitions, and had never received harm from any human being. She was so harmless herself, that it was not likely she ever would. Meantime, it was wise and kind of Ben to put no distrust into her mind, and to avoid making her think that she could go nowhere and do nothing without him. He believed that none but herself ever went to the stiller parts of the shore at the hours she chose; and he knew that if any went, it would only be people belonging to the hamlet, who would as soon think of quenching the beacon as harming Harriet. Ben often closed the door softly behind her,

and sometimes delayed putting off in the morning till he saw her long shadow on the distant sands: but he never troubled her by offering to undertake night in addition to day fishing, for the sake of protecting one who needed no protection.

One night, he was too sound asleep to hear his sister let herself out at eleven o'clock, after having gone to rest with the children at seven. There was no moon; but the stars were bright enough to show her every little pool and bay left by the tide, even if there had not been the beacon to light her path with its periodical radiance. Now casting a red tint over the wet sand, now trembling over the heaving waves, and now bringing out the apparition of a dark boat, dancing in the tide, the lighthouse gleam left few parts of the scenery unrevealed in turn. If any one had been looking out, Harriet herself, swathed and barefoot, and with her net and basket slung over her shoulder, might have appeared to come and go on the shore, as the light revolved. But all seemed to be already at rest in the cottages. A dog, here and there, was asleep on its master's threshold. No lights appeared through the windows, except where a young baby occasioned such an indulgence. Nothing moved in the hamlet but the light weathercock on the new bath-house. Nothing breathed but the night-breeze along the face

of the cliffs. Nothing spoke but the sea's everlasting voice; and that was at its gentlest, and at nearly the farthest recession of the tide. Now was the time for Harriet to think, when she had made up her mind whether the extreme point of the range of cliffs, the point behind which yon bright star had just risen, was the ten mile point or the thirteen; and whether the dawn would begin to shine behind her ere the dull-red line of sky before her should have become as gray as the sea. She had dismissed this, and bestowed a passing grateful thought on the difference between such a balmy air as this, and the cutting night-wind she had sometimes to encounter, when she was disturbed in her approach to other subjects by voices near her. At first she heard only one, a woman's voice, and fancied it might be calling her; but, in a momentary lull of the waves, she distinguished a hoarser tone. They were not pleasant voices; or, at least, not put to a pleasant use just now; and she wished to avoid them, if she could make out precisely the direction in which they came. While pausing for another moment to listen, the broadest light of the beacon fell towards her, casting two long shadows up to her feet, and disclosing her to the persons to whom those shadows belonged.

"Will you leave off, or must I make you?" said the man to his companion; "don't you see there is somebody listening to you?"

"'Tis Harriet, and she shall listen," cried Betsy. "Harriet, don't move off. I have something to tell you. I tell you that Jem Collins, that stands there, is a cruel, wicked wretch, that cares for nobody, if he can but please himself."

"Indeed, I feared so," replied Harriet.

"Ah! it is what every body will be telling me," cried Betsy; "I shall hear of nothing else all my days. I never would believe it. I believed him before every body, and gave him all I had, as often as he asked for it; ay, money, time upon time. And now he gives me up to go into the workhouse, and not a thing will he do for me or the child that 's coming."

"I always told you," replied Jem, "that there was the parish to go to. There were Porter's two children, and Lambert's, and plenty more, that were taken care of by the parish; and neither Porter nor Lambert had any trouble, being too poor, as I am, to pay to the order. You knew that as well as I did."

"I never took you for such a one as Porter, or Lambert either; and you turn out ten times worse; for you won't help me when you know I have not the parish, nor any thing else, to depend on."

"That is the parish's fault, not mine. Ay. Look about for the girl. She has slipped away from your foul tongue; and no wonder. Let her go. What has she to do with it?"

Betsy was bent on making Harriet a listener to the dispute. She watched intently to discover the direction in which she had stolen away, and sprang upon her presently to bring her back.

"O, I cannot come with you," said Harriet; "never mind me; I can do you no good now, Betsy; and my master desired me—"

"Not to speak to me, I suppose: but you shall; and so shall many more, who do n't intend it now. Every soul shall hear me tell about Jem Collins. Come here, Jem; come, and hear what I say about you."

Jem had taken advantage of her leaving his side to make his escape; and Betsy called to him in vain.

"He is gone," said Harriet; "do not look after him any more to-night, but go home, and try to be less angry against him. I do n't mean to say that he has not behaved very badly to you; but where 's the use of telling every body so? If I were you, I should just try to get through as quietly as I could."

Harriet's tongue clave to the roof of her mouth at the bare thought, "if she were Betsy."

"Quietly! I will never be quiet!" cried Betsy; he coaxed me, and coaxed me, for long, and then he said he would marry me, and was getting money and every thing I had from me, under that pretence. And then,

when it was too late, he talked about Porter's children and the parish—"

"I think you had better go to Miss Barry," said Harriet; "she will tell you from her father whether the parish can do any thing for you. And, indeed, there is no use in talking to me about it; I don't know any thing about what people ought to do when—"

"To Miss Barry! I went to her father more than a week ago."

"And could not he help you at all!"

"O, he got the colonel to give the order upon Jem for the money. But they gave the order to me; Mr. Barry saying that it was no business of his, and that I must get the money from Jem. I have been trying ever since, and not one penny can I get."

"I am sure he might earn it," said Harriet indignantly.

"So he might, if he was not the idlest and the wickedest wretch that ever deceived any body. After all his speeches and promises! I 'll expose him! I 'll tell every girl in the parish to take care how she trusts to such as he."

It occurred to Harriet that this might be what Mr. Barry intended, when he declined interfering between Betsy and her lover.

"They will see quite enough, without your paining yourself to tell them, Betsy," said she. "Nobody thinks well of Jem Collins, or of

any one who would act as he has acted by you. Better take it as patiently now as you can."

"Patiently! Go and talk to them about being patient that are better treated by the parish than I am. Go to Porter's woman, in the next parish, living comfortably with her two on what the parish ordered for them. Porter won't pay, any more than Jem; but the parish does not lay the burden of that upon her, as my parish does upon me."

Harriet had no thought of reasoning with poor Betsy just now; but she did wonder who should bear the burden of the profligacy of one party, if not the other guilty party. To visit it upon the innocent rate-payers, that the guilty parties might go free, seemed very unjust. She thought Ben would have good reason to complain if he were compelled to pay any part of what Jem would not pay, for the support of Jem's child, that Betsy might live at ease. It was a heavy burden for poor Betsy to bear; but it was clear that Mr. Barry was letting it rest on the right shoulders.

"I did not mean to stay; I must not stay," observed Harriet; "but just tell me what you mean to do; for I am frightened for you."

"Do! why, there is but one thing for me to do, unless I drown myself—"

"For shame, Betsy! you would not be so wicked."

"I'll not do it till I have made every body know what Jem Collins is. You may depend upon that. I looked to him to get me out of service, which I hate. And now there is nothing left before me but the workhouse, which is ten times worse. I have not a shilling; and there is nobody to give me one, knowing that the workhouse is the proper place for such a friendless poor creature as I am now. So, there I must go. It makes me sick to think of it; with that high wall all round, and nobody there, scarcely; and the quiet and the work together; while Jem will be out in the sun, and laughing and pleasing himself, just as if he had never heard of such a person as me. Or, perhaps, sometimes his laugh may be at me."

"Turn your thoughts some other way, Betsy," said Harriet, terrified at her companion's tokens of passion, and turning her back towards the beacon, that her own tears might not be seen. "There is no use in afflicting yourself in this manner. Turn your thoughts some other way."

"Which way?" was the fierce question; to which Harriet could find no ready answer, Betsy's condition appeared so wholly forlorn. She was secure of necessaries and protection from injury; but beyond this, there seemed not a hope for her.

"Go, go your ways," said Betsy presently.

"I've called you to witness about Jem, and that was what I wanted. Go your ways now."

"If there was any thing that any body could do for you," said Harriet—"It is not likely that any one could prevail with Jem, if you cannot. Better give up all thought of that, and put him out of your mind, and have nothing more to do with him; particularly in the way of complaining of him; which will give occasion of triumph and talk to some people. But since it is certain that you will not let him delude you again—"

"Not he, nor any body; depend upon that."

"Since you are not likely to be deluded again, you can give your mind to being patient under your lot, and getting such good will by being steady, as may help you to be free of the workhouse, in time."

Betsy turned in disgust from the representation which held out no more than this. But what more could Harriet, or any one, hold out? With many tears Harriet asked this; and the question and the sympathy softened Betsy.

"Do go now, Harriet," said she; "I shall not tell your master how long I kept you talking with me. He won't hear it, unless you choose to tell him."

"O, he does not mean that I should never speak to you in any way; only—He would

not object, I am sure, to what we have been saying; but—"

"Well, I wonder, since he is so particular about you, that he lets you come out in this way, along the shore."

"I dare say he does not know what I do; though Ben does. But I should tell him, if he asked, that I never met or saw any thing to be afraid of."

"Well; I was always afraid, as long as I can remember."

Harriet was inwardly surprised. She had hitherto taken Betsy for rather a bold girl. What was Betsy afraid of? she asked.

"I hardly know; but I never go near a shadow like that, without prying to see if there is nobody there; and when there is any rattle on the shingle—But I won't talk in that way to you, when you have so much further to go. But I could no more go on by myself, as you are doing now, or even with you, than—Though, to be sure, one might go with you, if at all; for I dare say nobody thinks of meddling with you, or with any body belonging to you. But, do you really mean to go on to-night, now?"

"Indeed I do, and quickly; for there's the clock going twelve; and the tide will not wait for me. Don't you be out so late any more, unless you have business like mine."

"I can always get in, by a way of my own;

and I shall have little enough liberty soon." And, under the irritation of this thought—a most painful one to a person of Betsy's tastes and habits—she turned away without saying good night.

"I wonder what made Betsy afraid, so long ago as she speaks of," thought Harriet, as she went on her way. "I do not wonder at her being apt to start at every thing now; but when she was younger, and before she got into any mischief, that I know of, I wonder what it could be. She used to say the same Scripture words with Ben and me at school, though I am afraid she has forgotten them many a time since—'The darkness and the light are both alike unto Thee.' I always think of that when I find one night bright moonlight, and another almost pitch dark. But, except for taking care that the tide does not come up too high before I am aware, I do not remember having been troubled with taking care in my walks. I just remember, once or twice, on a very dark night, having a feeling come over me that I had when a child, and did not understand the beacon, as if the light, at the full, came quick and close up to my eyes, and away again: but it only made my breath come quick for a moment. I have often heard, though, that such fancies come thick into minds that are troubled, like poor Betsy's. What is ever to be done about her? It is

wretched to think of, any way. Nothing that Jem, or any body, could do now for her would do her any good, that I see; and it will take such a weary time to win her way up again out of her shame. I could not wonder to hear her talk of drowning herself, though I know, and I told her, how wicked it would be. But I should be much tempted to do it in her case. And to think what is before me, instead of such a dreary look out as hers!—the sitting at the door, making Ben's shirts, with Harry to prattle to me; and the getting Fred ready, as such a handsome little fellow should be; and Ben's having a boat of his own, and never a sharp word between us two now, as there used to be; and the sea and the sunshine open to us, free as we are, and accountable to nobody. Ben says my master gets to be guided by me in every thing. I am sure I have no wish for that, further than to make him comfortable. But how different from poor Betsy, when we used to sit together at school, and I thought her so much happier, because she was bigger and merrier. If one could but bring her out of the scrape, to be as I am! But one can only pray God to heal and help her, and take care against being proud when one thanks him for oneself. It makes one wonder why he is so very good to Ben and me. But I will teach it to Fred and Harry, at quiet times, when they will take my meaning. I

should like them to be sensible of it, whether or not they should be orphans, too, before they are fit to take care of themselves. Now, here 's the place, and it is high time I was busy in it. Betsy talked of looking into the shadow sometimes—I thought I saw something moving under the cliff just now; but, whether it is a fisherman, or a fisherman's wife, or any body else that is watching, they will do me no harm."

So Harriet lowered her net from her shoulder, and took her way into the midst of the pool; breaking the mimic stars on its surface into a million of sparkling fragments as she went.

She had crossed and recrossed, and carried a fresh prey to the shore several times, when, as she stooped over her basket, she thought she perceived some one first sauntering under the cliff, and then pausing, as if to watch her; all which made no difference in her proceedings. When once more in the middle of the pool, a voice accosted her; and on turning towards it, she saw a figure standing on the margin. In answer to the "I say, mistress," she asked who it was.

"Only Jem Collins. I just came after you to speak about Betsy, because you have more power over her than any body; and you heard what she has been saying to-night."

"Which you cannot unsay, I should think.

"The thing is, I can't maintain ner and the child, if I wished it ever so much; and the parish is the best help she had a right to expect."

"So I think, when she trusted to you."

"But if you or somebody do not stop her tongue, there's not a soul in the place will hear a word I've got to say. I wish you would persuade her to hold her tongue, and not go about abusing me for what can't be helped now. I wish you would persuade her"—

"I did try."

"Ah! I thought you would, when you knew the whole."

"I did try; but it was for her sake, not for yours."

"Well; you women are jealous for one another, as you should be; but if you fancy any body belonging to you to be in such a scrape—suppose your brother Ben—"

"Ben!" cried Harriet, in a tone which came back to her from the face of the cliff.

"Well; any body else that you care about. Where would be the use of raising the whole neighborhood, about a thing that can't be undone; the parish not stepping in, as he expected, to shield him?"

"No use, that I see; for the only thing that can be done is done, without Betsy's afflicting herself by talking as she does. The parish

has taken care that all shall be warned against such as you, by letting it be seen how you treat Betsy. It was this being done already that made me advise her to take every thing as quietly as she can."

"Well! thank you for that advice; and I hope you will continue it."

"If Betsy asks me again, I shall say the same as I said to-night; but not because you desire it. If you had come to ask me to comfort her, or to notice her, or to nurse her, I should have listened to you with some pleasure: but you come to ask for yourself, and not for her; and so what you say has no weight with me."

"I did not think you had had it in you to be so hard-hearted, mistress; and so sharp with one, too."

Harriet did not think it necessary to justify herself from the charge of being sharp to Jem Collins. She went on with her business, and let him talk till he found he had no more to say. As he sauntered away, chucking pebbles into the water as he went, she paused for a moment to look after him, and glory in Ben's activity of body and cheerfulness of spirit, which formed as strong a contrast with Jem's entire demeanor as kindly innocence with selfish guilt.

This emotion sprang up again within her when she next saw Ben, as she was returning

in the sunrise—the very early sunrise—when few but Ben thought of being abroad. She was shading her eyes from the level rays, to see if any one was stirring among the cottages, when she perceived her brother sitting before the stern of his master's boat, with a paint-pot in one hand, and the brush in the other. When she came up, she saw that it was white paint, and that large letters were being formed on the stern.

"Why, Ben; what are you painting?"

"My own name. I did not intend to tell you till it was done; but now you see. Master brought me this paint last night, and bade me change the name while my hand was in for painting. He says the boat should be mine, as I am always the one to go out in it now."

"And very true; and very kind of him! But I think you are the first person hereabouts that ever had a boat of his own at your age, Ben."

Ben smiled consciously, and took prodigious pains with the J then under his hands. He also told her that the bench was to be put up time enough to be painted this day, so as to be dry for company to sit on by next Sunday. If it was pleasant to make Ben's shirts while seated on the door-step, what must it be on the bench which his own hands had earned and painted? Harriet could not go to bed for

three more hours, as Ben recommended. She was neither tired nor sleepy. She had rather take the other painting brush, and touch up the window-frame and door-posts, as there was much more paint than Ben would want for his boat, and he was quite sure they might use it all.

All was finished, and the wondering children duly instructed how to go in and out without smearing their clothes, before Monk came forth to admire, and to receive Harriet's confession of how much she had had to say to Betsy. He soon saw enough of the horror and disgust which had been excited in her to be satisfied that she had received no contamination. The real danger of such contamination exists where parish charity interferes, to make crime a condition of privilege rather than of punishment.

CHAPTER IX.

LAST HOMES

"Goody Gidney dead!" "She would not have believed it herself, if the doctor had told her it was to be before she was ninety six." "They say she did not know what to make of being ill, and scolded the doctor right well

for not curing her in a day." These were the exclamations which resounded from all parts of the hamlet when Goody Gidney, who, it was thought, was never to die, had actually breathed her last, before the end of the summer. There were some who openly spoke of its being high time that the parish should be relieved from the burden of a useless and thankless person, who had encumbered it for upwards of seventy-five years; others, interested in the correction of the social abuses of the place, admitted to themselves in silence that they felt a yet greater relief; and the kindest of the old woman's friends could do nothing more in the way of lamentation than recall what they described as her cheerfulness and contentment; a sort of cheerfulness and contentment which society could not afford to let many of its members indulge.

"Is there any body, colonel," said Mr. Barry,—"would you mention any two or three whom you would wish to be hired for bearers?"

"Hired, my dear sir! let the workhouse people be the bearers, to be sure."

"Willingly, if we had any; but there is not a man in the workhouse, but the governor."

"Is it possible?"

"Perfectly true. Poor Rowe, who is not the best of workmen, (which kept him with us

so long,) was taken on by Dove a few days ago; and he seems to think he shall get on pretty well. He was the last we had. If you chose to make the women the bearers, we could not muster enough."

"Well, then, hire what is necessary. We need not grudge it, as it is the last we shall have to pay for Goody Gidney. If you had been made overseer while she might still have been called able-bodied, we should have paid the last many a year ago. We must never admit such an incubus on the hamlet again."

"The people seem to feel much as you do about that. How they are talking about the poor old soul on every hand!"

"They would not, if she had not been so wonderfully cheerful and contented, as her friends praise her for having been. If she had shown the least desire to do her duty to society, or even the least sense of obligation to those who maintained her by the fruits of their toil, our people would have been the first to bid her not think about what it gave them pleasure to do for her. Our people are far, very far from being hard-hearted to their neighbors now, whatever they may have been formerly. It cheers one's very soul to see what they will do to help one another."

"Yes; it will be found so, I believe and trust, with all societies of people, everywhere, when help is seen to be really of use, and

every man is allowed the disposal of his own. Wherever there is man, there will be charity, unless some disturbing power is introduced to turn his aims aside, and dishearten him."

"That is a happy faith to have."

"And is it not a wholesome one? Is it not a well-grounded one?"

"Certainly, if we may judge from what you have done here, by acting upon it. Well; you had better get this poor creature into the ground as soon as you can, that the people may leave off talking about her. It can do them no good to dwell any longer on her encroachments. When do you mean the funeral to be?"

"I should have wished it to be to-morrow morning; but to-morrow is open day at the savings bank, and I cannot leave my post. I make it a rule to be present, as overseer, at all pauper-funerals, now that they occur so seldom; and I would not pick out Goody Gidney's as the one to absent myself from."

"Could not you depute somebody to fill your place at the savings bank?"

"Impossible! Nobody is so much in the confidence of the depositors as the secretary for the time being. They have so much to say to me, that I would not turn them over to any one else till I go out of office, if I could help it."

"I wonder how many overseers in England

are secretaries to the savings banks of their parishes. They have little enough to do in the management of deposits, I should think."

"Or in their office of overseer; in the one or the other. I find that the less I have upon my hands as overseer, the more I have to do at the savings bank. Almost every man now who is above hopes and fears about the parish, that is, almost every man in the hamlet, has a larger or smaller deposit in the bank; and they see no more reason for reserve with the overseer about their little wealth than with any other man."

"Reserve as to their money-savings would be of little use while they offer to the eyes of their overseer so many other testimonies of their being above the need of parish care. I seldom take a walk down to the beach without seeing something new about the houses. Who would have thought of poor Mrs. Dyer setting up a bathing-machine? and her cousin Scott having actually achieved a cow and a brood of poultry on the down? As for your daughters' protegés, Harriet and Ben, there is no saying what state of beauty their place may grow into in time."

"Ah! that bench has been an object of ambition this long while, as I have reason to know. It was first planned to be, among other purposes, a resting-place for my daughter in her walks, when we all thought she might

never be better. Now that she is well, and wants rest no more than other people, it is still considered pre-eminently her seat; and I wish you had been with us when she took possession of it."

"I wish I had. You will very likely see me in the churchyard at the hour of the funeral. How will you have it followed?"

"By three out of the Weston house. There are only three that are capable."

"And the biggest child out of the school will make the fourth."

"I had rather avoid that. I keep the children as much as possible from being associated with grown paupers."

"Very right, very right! Some good-natured body will drop in and make the fourth, I dare say."

There was nobody in Hurst good-natured enough to offer to appear to be a pauper even for a single hour, and it was not the kind of favor that the overseer chose to ask of his neighbors. The governess of the Weston school, who ran no risk of being mistaken for a pauper, filled the place in the little procession. She could easily be spared, as she had now scarcely any pupils. One after another they had been transferred to the flourishing school at Hurst; bringing their two-pence a week with due regularity, and thinking more highly of education the more completely it

was disconnected with public and private charity. Only three or four sickly and friendless children remained at Weston, helping one another with their lessons this day, till their governess should return from the funeral.

Though there was no pretence of grief on the occasion, there was no levity. The few gazers who were in the churchyard abstained from all reflections on the dead; and if one whispered to another the hope that Heaven would grant him a more honorable departure, and a very different kind of burial, the observation was made with the quiet seriousness which befitted the occasion.

"Will you give just another look to the old place, before it is shut up?" said the overseer to colonel Lee, pointing to the workhouse, as they were leaving the churchyard.

"Millar is leaving it to-day, is he?"

"This afternoon. He proceeds to X—, whither the fame of his management has reached, and where they want to instal him as governor. X— is so large a place that it is scarcely to be hoped that its workhouse will be actually emptied, like ours; but he may possibly so far reduce its establishment as to intrust it to other hands, five years hence, and travel on to do the same work in some new place."

"And many a five years may he live to carry on the work! What a work it is! Let

there never be an end of honoring Howard for having explored the depths of prison-houses; but he achieves a yet nobler task, who so sweeps out the abominations of our pauper-houses as to leave no temptations to guilt and idleness to harbor there. But, Barry, what will you do, in case of a vagrant appearing, or any other case arising?"

"Open the house, and put in a governor from among our own people, who now perfectly understand our philosophy and methods. If it is but for a single night, the workhouse shall be opened."

"It will be long before you find any one to give you the trouble. A vagrant will rather pass on, an indigent man's friends will rather help him over his difficulty, than that either should be held up in the view of the hamlet as its solitary pauper."

"We have not had a vagrant these two years; and if you will go in with me, you will see the last of our able-bodied indigent."

Mr. and Mrs. Millar's last goods and chattels were being driven from the gate as the gentlemen entered it. Betsy, with her baby on one arm and her little bundle of clothes on the other, was making her last humble courtesy to her host and hostess. She did not look up as she passed the gentlemen.

"What is to become of that poor thing?" inquired the colonel.

"She thinks she can pick up a living by hard work among her poor neighbors," replied Millar. "She will have a toilsome life of it; but she was bent upon going, and she has taken such pains, under my wife, to qualify herself for the kinds of labor the poor folks require, when they can hire help at all, that I hope she may find bread. If not, she knows where she may have it; but I believe she would work twenty hours out of the twenty-four, rather than come back. Well, wife; are you waiting for me? Perhaps, gentlemen, you would like to walk round with me while I lock up."

Mrs. Dyer, who attended to receive the keys, in order to the discharge of her office of airing and cleaning the house from time to time, now followed, to see that the tables and benches were piled up, and the rest of the homely furniture stowed away so as to be kept clean and dry with the least trouble to herself. The footsteps of the party resounded as they traversed the empty rooms; and so did the turning of the locks, though the only rusty lock on the premises was that of the cell, a place allotted to disorderly paupers, the door of which had, however, stood open for many a year past. It required a strong hand to slip the bolt. The outer gate was closed by Millar, with a slam so energetic as to make the whole party smile. When he had flung

the weighty key into Mrs. Dyer's apron, he bowed to the gentlemen, in token of his office being now discharged.

"What a fine sea it is to-day!" observed the colonel, when he had shaken hands with Millar and his wife, and watched them for a moment on their path. "What a fine rippling sea it is!" he repeated, taking the bridle of his horse from the groom, who was waiting for him near the edge of the cliff. "I shall ride home by the sands, where the women and children look so busy, while their husbands and fathers are standing out in that little fleet of boats."

When the figures of the colonel and his groom were vanishing in the distance of the sunny shore, Mr. Barry was still standing, as when they parted, looking abroad from the edge of the cliff. The most punctual man in the three hamlets was, for once, heedless of the time.